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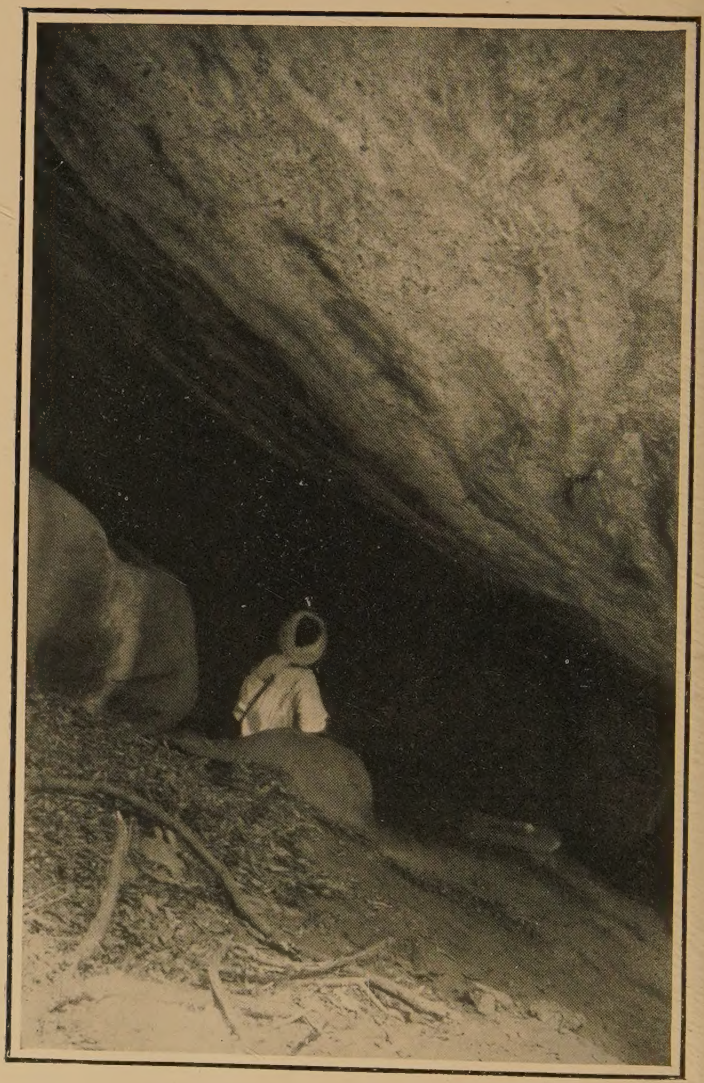

Photo by A. G. Arnot

THE SADHU'S CAVE

The cave of the Decision, which seemed haunted by dark influences. A mass of rock 100 feet long and very wide and thick, had been thrown down upon huge boulders that stood embedded in the bank that fell to the river. These rocks divided it roughly into four caverns or rooms, through one of which a stream of water ran, filling the cavern with a chill clammy air. (Page 147.)

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FOREWORD

By the Bishop of Travancore

THIS is the story of a real person and of a real tragedy of quite recent date. Parts of it may appear too good, and others too bad to believe. Yet it is fact, not fiction; and, as one who lived in the district where the tragedy ran its course, I was concerned, though in a subordinate capacity, with some of the episodes recorded, being in fact the friend referred to on page 77, who was selected in so singular a manner to be the minister of Raj's baptism, and I am glad to attest the truth of the narrative so far as the events referred to came under my observation. I desire also to confess myself convinced—where indeed I have had no means of full or direct verification, but am aware of the unique sources of information accessible to the writer—by the author's general estimate of Raj's character and conduct. The story is a wonderful illustration of the power of God's grace, however thwarted within the limits of this life by untoward circumstances. It also throws light on a dark side of village life in India which is concealed from ordinary observation. On both accounts, therefore, its publication is to be welcomed.

E. A. L. Moore,
Bishop of Travancore and Cochin,
formerly missionary of the C.M.S. in Tinnevelly.

FOREWORD

By the Bishop of Tinnevelly.

THIS is a great and moving story. It belongs to one of the world's great stories, stories of the Great Shepherd of the sheep who is come to seek and to save that which was lost. It describes a man who fled the Hound of Heaven.

> "From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
> But with unhurrying chase
> And unperturbed pace
> Deliberate speed, majestic instancy
> They beat—and a voice beat
> More instant than the Feet—
> 'All things betray Thee, who betrayest Me.'"

Raj was no saint of the stained-glass window type. He was very human and a real sportsman and, although he failed to reach the highest, we cannot but sympathise with this sorely-tried man struggling to win his way back to the life of a free and honest citizen. Personally I never met him (he died only a few weeks after my arrival in Tinnevelly), but I know what the popular opinion of him was and I have met several of his friends. Some I have baptised, some I have confirmed, and I know how they have suffered for their faith.

Perhaps something should be said of the dark background of this story. It reminds me of the Bay of Naples, one of the fairest sights in the whole world, but behind it looms dark and grim the terrors of Vesuvius. So behind this story of the amazing love of God and His transforming grace we cannot help seeing grim spectres of cruelty and treachery.

Now this book is a story, but it is a story which has come within the writer's own experience, the facts of which she has taken the greatest pains to verify, and she can speak with the authority of thirty years' residence in India, as well as of an intimate knowledge of the language and customs of the people. She has laid her finger on a covered sore of India. This book, therefore, must challenge thought, but it will be an inspiration to all who in India and elsewhere are working for public righteousness and civic justice, for the spread of Christian ideals of citizenship, and for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Norman Tinnevelly.

FOREWORD

By the Bishop of Madras

IN the easy optimism of the missionary meeting, the triumphs of the Kingdom of Christ may seem to be lightly gained. One naturally hastens to a triumphant climax. Learn a lesson from the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. The first rides out splendid on his white horse and crowned: he goes forth conquering and to conquer. Conquer he will, but not lightly. His figure fades, and there comes forth the red horseman of strife, the black horseman of famine and the pale horseman of death: and at the sight of these even the souls of the martyrs cry, "How long?" Then comes the climax when the Lamb of God, Himself slain for the sin of man, appears in His majesty; leads His people in triumph by living fountains of water, and God Himself dries their tears.

This is the real path of the Kingdom: and in lands where God is not yet known as the God of love, it is the path which a Church or an individual believer often has to tread.

This book pictures such a struggle and such a hard-won triumph, and those who would help should ponder and pray and work to bring the triumph nearer.

Harry Madras.

FOREWORD

By T. Howard Somervell, M.A., F.R.C.S.

THE story of Raj is the story of a sportsman; it should appeal to all who love adventure. But it is more than that. It is absolutely true; its publication was delayed for some time in order that everything in the book should be verified. It is also an effective answer to those who think that Missions are useless, and native Christians necessarily humbugs. For Raj began as a very sporting type of brigand, yet after becoming a Christian he was an immensely finer man, as the story will show. And through all this book there runs the excitement of a man-hunt, and the lurid background of the torture-chamber which, as few people at home realise, is too often the normal background of Indian village life; yet it is high time they did realise it, for surely we Britons are in a sense responsible, if not for it, at least for its mitigation.

Throughout this story of Raj, the effect of this lurid background is as nothing when the power of God comes along. And it is high time people realised the power of God, too.

So let me, whose life has been largely one of adventure, add my humble foreword to this really great story: if you want adventure, the glamour of the East, and a true story about a real sportsman—here it is.

T. Howard Somervell.

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RAJ, BRIGAND CHIEF

PART I

Though I waste half my realm to unearth
Toad or rat, 'tis well worth. . . .
So, I soberly laid my last plan
To extinguish the man.
Round his creep-hole, with never a break
Ran my fires for his sake ;
Overhead, did my thunder combine
With my underground mine :
Till I looked from my labour content
To enjoy the event.

When sudden . . . how think ye, the end ?
Did I say " without friend " ?
Say rather, from marge to blue marge
The whole sky grew his targe
With the sun's self for visible boss,
While an Arm ran across
Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast
Where the wretch was safe prest !
Do you see ? just my vengeance complete,
The man sprang to his feet,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed.
So, I was afraid !

BROWNING, " Instans Tyrannus."

CHAPTER I

THE JUMP

" JUMP the well ? " said Rama. " I doubt it."

" Jump it I will," said Raj, with the full faith of his seventeen years.

" Wilt bite a mouthful out of the sky and leave a scar behind ? " quoted Rama.

Raj laughed.

The two, man and boy, were standing by the low wall of a well by the outskirts of a village dropped at random on a plain under

mountains that run in patterns of half-moons for a thousand miles through India. The man, as he tossed off his white shoulder-scarf and, sitting astride on the wall of the well, proceeded to calculate the width, showed a strong sinewy frame; but the boy was athlete all over, and his merry eyes danced as he watched his friend ticking off cubits and spans in the air with a long lean hand. "So many? so many is it?" he said, as Rama counted aloud, and he flung back his shoulders and laughed. On a day that saw that boy's name a household word in his own little world and beyond, and white men and women came to look at the well, and measure it with a tape, and manifested the strangest care about so trivial a thing as half an inch more or less, Rama recalled that gesture and that laugh.

The well was certainly fairly large even for India, land of large wells. It was twenty feet seven inches across, or, including the stone walls built round it, it was twenty-three feet. The near wall at the point where the jump would have to be taken was two feet three inches high, and had on both sides a sloping shoulder five inches wide. To jump the well, Raj would have to light first on the top of this wall, and from it clear the well and the wall opposite. Just clearing the further wall, the minimum distance was twenty-one feet nine and a half inches, and as it would be impossible to drop straight by the wall, the jump would have to be several inches further.

"I'll do it," said the boy to himself. "I'll do it if I have to practise for a year," and all the way up from the well to his home he was thinking about that jump.

His home was not far off. It was a neat small house of red brick, roofed with red tiles, so that in sunset it looked like a little rock of red coral. Inside there was the same reddish colouring, for the walls were smoothly plastered with a kind of red cement, and in fire-light and lamp-light the rooms were like coral caves. In the living room there was a book cupboard of dark teak wood let into the wall, and the door and its panels and fine beading were of the best old teak. Door and panels and the capitals of the tiny verandah pillars were carved and, though never dusted, except by the wind, this carving gave an air of distinction to the little house. At one side stood the shed for oxen and farm utensils, quaint ploughs, mat-roofed carts and the like: straw stacks stood near by, and the whole little compound framed in a green country at the foot of the hills wore that pleasant expression of prosperity that seems to push the thought of trouble very far away.

And now for a while, morning and evening, Raj practised long

jumps, sprinting from a palm tree that stood a little distance from the well. And he marked lines on the sand by the side of the wall, till he was sure that he could clear the well. A dozen or more village lads were with him the day that he took the jump for the first time, and they shouted with a great shout that drew half of the people out of the village as he landed clear of the wall. "There, just there did his feet touch," said Rama, digging his bare toe into the soft ground a little distance from the wall. "We marked it at the time and well do I remember it." While the white people were busy with their tape measure and notebook, Rama had sat on the wall, watching them with the puckered brow of polite surprise, but now, the calculations finished, he had swung off and stood on the grass by the well side. "After that day there was nothing in the way of long jumping that Raj did not attempt. And he climbed like a cat; but from the day he could walk he could climb, for muscles of steel had he. This jump was only one of many, and some of them were harder than this: but the first big jump, who could forget?" It was vivid enough apparently even then, some fifteen years afterwards, for an oldish man came up at that moment, and slouching down on the wall joined in the conversation, and told how one day when Raj came to jump a kingfisher was sitting on one of the steps leading down into the well. As Raj jumped, the startled bird rose. There was a flash of blue, and Raj in mid-air shot out his hand and caught the bird as it passed him. He landed on the other side with the bird in his hand.

CHAPTER II

THE YELLOW PAPER

THE bright years flew. There was a sad time when Raj buried his father and his mother (in his clan burial, not burning, was usual). He hired a band to mourn, with many wind instruments and tom-toms, and made great burials for them, and after all was over, the feasters feasted, and the offerings offered, he comforted himself with the good gifts left to him. For he had been married to two sisters (as a Hindu this was allowed) and they were as devoted to each other as to him, so what might have been an uncomfortable arrangement proved exceedingly happy, and Raj's sky was blue.

Then, after he had been given a little daughter, whom in his pleasure he named Delight, and a little son, most welcome boon

of the gods, Sella, their mother, the elder of the two sisters, became ill with a malady nothing could ease.

"What more is left to us to do?" said Seetha, the younger sister, one day in despair, after the departure of the village barber who had doctored poor Sella for weeks. Squatting on the kitchen verandah with a flat stone before him, he had patiently ground pig's tusk, elephant's tooth, stag's horn, tiger's claw, and finally some powdered silver and gold, and made a paste, and added chopped herbs and a few grains of white arsenic from the bazaar. This thick and difficult mixture of greenish grey gruel Sella had as patiently swallowed, and yet she was no better. And frequent offerings had, of course, been sent to various gods. "What more can we do?" said Seetha again. "There is nothing left to do."

Yes, there was one thing left to do. Wandering round the villages, well spoken of in spite of her extreme peculiarities, was a girl known as the Praying Girl, who went to any house where people called her to pray. As a last hope, Seetha sent for her, and escorted by an older woman the Praying Girl arrived.

She was a mere slip of a girl, very slim, for she lived on frugal fare, and spent nights and days in fasts and vigils, but she had the root of the matter in her. "Without doubt," was her calm assurance to Seetha, "the God of the Christians hears prayer. Also, for He is Lord of life and death, He can deliver thy sister from death," and going into the stuffy little room, whose every aperture was closed to the dangerous fresh air, she pleaded long and ardently for Sella's life. And an awe fell on Seetha. Raj was away at the time; when she tried to share that strange experience with him she found that he could not understand. So she told herself perhaps after all it was a mistake; but it did seem as if someone had heard. And Sella sat up and gasped, "I am healed," and Seetha sent an offering to their own gods lest they should be affronted, and another and a better one to the apparently more powerful Lord of life and death. And Sella worshipped Him then who was Lord of life and death. Then, suddenly, she died.

And now Seetha had two children to mother. She took Sella's baby boy to her heart as her own, and the little daughter was never allowed to feel motherless. Then came a joyful day when grief in parting with Sella was swallowed up in the joy of welcoming her first-born son.

"A son! a son! To Seetha is born a son!" The words shouted across the fields met Raj and filled him with exultation. Two sons, oh, rich was Raj that day, a man favoured of the gods.

Off he ran to the shrine under the tree where his mother had knelt with him and taught him as a little boy how to press his hands together in prayer, and he offered his thank-offerings. Then he hastened to Seetha, and her mother laid the little new thing in his arms, and his heart was soft and tender as a child's with the sweetness of this happiness. Then he went to the fields again, and now another messenger came running, "Raj! Raj! Raj! The Yellow Paper is out against thee!" It was a messenger who had raced with the news which had escaped from the nearest police station. "The Yellow Paper (warrant of arrest) will accuse thee of sharing in the dacoity in the Village of the Pool. Flee, Raj! Flee!"

CHAPTER III

O SIR, HELP!

RAJ fled to the forest.

His friends followed him, and ministered to his needs, and supplied him with instant and intimate news of the search for him on the Plains. And it never crossed his mind or theirs that this evasion of the Yellow Paper would argue that he was a guilty man, and make it all the harder to prove his innocence. From his point of view and theirs, it was the only thing to do; for in a land where the facts of life have coined a word meaning a false case, and where a powerful enemy's first threat to his weaker foe is that such a case will be brought against him, it may well be that an innocent man will become inextricably entangled if once his feet are caught in the mere outer fringe of the net of the Law. So in the first moment of panic, Raj, who knew that somewhere among the shadows on the borders of his path there was one who might be watching for such a chance as this, thought of nothing else but flight as possible at all.

India is a sunny land, and to the casual glance appears as frank as her open face, but many a village has hidden away in its heart at least one dread, and often several. There are influences that move in silence; there are powers that wait with an awful patience till the moment arrives when the blow can be dealt that will strike its victim down.

All through his fearless youth Raj had refused the grovelling obeisance demanded by one who walked as a god among men. So it was not hard to account for the Yellow Paper. Raj knew about the dacoity in the Village of the Pool in the adjoining Native State. An acquaintance of his own had, most unhappily,

been mixed up in it. Had this furnished the watcher with the opportunity for which he had waited? Raj remembered now that once and again it had seemed to him as though a little cloud were arising out of the sea. But before it rose it melted in the all-pervading blue. Now, suddenly, his whole sky was overcast.

There was just one ray of light. If only he could reach the highest of his immediate world, him whom he called the Great, who lived in a big house surrounded by many attendants, if only he could get through them all to the Great himself, he would understand. Was he not as a king and a father? Did he not know everything? He would know that Raj had no chance to prove an alibi when well-paid witnesses were ready to prove that he had been in the Village of the Pool with firearms in his hands. Yes, he would know. He would know all about the ways of courts, and he would speak the word, and the trouble would melt as the little clouds had melted, and leave not a stain behind.

So Raj sent word to Seetha to keep a brave heart for he would soon be home, and, finding a visit to the Great quite impracticable, he wrote a letter, explaining everything in full, and begging him to put all right, and sent it to the post by a trusty messenger, and waited, standing on a crag on the hill-side, shading his eyes with his hands, hour after hour for many days, watching for the runner who would hold aloft a letter as he ran. He waited thus till hope failed; for no answer ever came. And so little did Raj know then of the meaning or ways of the Law that he could not have understood, even if it had been explained to him, why Justice herself forbade the reply he had been so sure would come.

Down in the little red house Seetha waited, too, for sound of the wind that would blow the clouds from the sky, and bring back the happy fair weather. But it did not come. Her heart was very heavy. Her parents were caring for the family, Raj had made all possible arrangements for her comfort and the children's; but life with Raj away was desolate indeed.

But Seetha was not forgotten. Four or five hours' walk from her village was a house which had never heard of her or of Raj. That house, the Garden House, was set in the midst of a garden where there were many cottages full of children, and the Garden Village children, as they grew up, were accustomed to go to the villages round about, telling any who would listen of a Saviour from sin and a Comforter in distress. Upon an afternoon a month or two after Raj's flight, Nesa, one of these young girls, remembering that a woman in the Village of the Cactus, a mile or so distant, had asked to be taught, arranged to go to her, taking with her an older woman as chaperon.

When she reached the house she found a young wife with a baby boy in her arms sitting on the inner verandah of the house. The girl was gentle, her eyes were large and soft like the eyes of a fawn, but they looked as if they had known the feel of tears, and Nesa asked her what her trouble was. The girl told her. "And so," she ended her tale with a little broken sob, "he is up in the forest, and how can he ever come down? They will carry him to jail if he comes down. It is a false case" (she used the strange hybrid word which describes it), "thou knowest how hard it is to find a defence from that."

Nesa knew, all India knows. She nodded sympathetically, and the women of the house sighed.

But though Nesa knew of no comfort where such cases are concerned, she knew of comfort that can carry one through distress, and she began to tell Seetha of the Cooler of our weariness. "Come unto Me," He says, "ye who are troubled and are bearing heavy burdens, and I will cool your weariness." But Seetha did not at once respond. She knew Nesa must be speaking of the Christians' God, and had He not failed her before, or answered but to disappoint? How could she be sure that He would hear her now, or that if He heard He would not seem to help and then fail her again? Is to pray to Him to wait even as the parrot waits for the bursting of the pod of the silk cotton tree? The pod bursts indeed, but only fluff flies out, there is no fruit for the satisfying of the parrot's hunger. Is prayer, after all, like that?

Not just at once, but gradually, the assurance and the comfort Nesa offered stole into Seetha's heart. Something in the younger girl's quiet confidence helped her. At last she said, "Will He listen if we call upon Him now?" And they both knelt down on the beaten earthen floor of the cottage, and Nesa told Him whom she called Lord of life and death (familiar word to Seetha) about poor Seetha's trouble, and Seetha herself broke in with, "O Sir, help! Deign to listen to me. O Sir," and out went her arms in appeal, "I implore You to listen and help. O Sir, help."

There was quiet then for a few minutes, and Seetha broke in again with another, "Sir, I ask You kindly to turn the heart of my husband who is in the forest to Yourself."

What exactly she meant who shall say? It may have been only that the faithful little wife longed that, somehow, the comfort which had soothed her should soothe him, too, or there may have been more in it than that, for before she rose from her knees she said, "And, Sir, kindly keep him from evil. This, also, Sir, I do entreat." Then she rose content.

What had led her to that house that afternoon? Nothing but a passing fancy to see her relatives who lived in the Village of the Cactus?

"It happened so by its own doing. It happened so by the doing of the Shining One." By one or other of these two phrases India explains such a coincidence as this chance meeting of Seetha and Nesa. To those who believe that the story of "Gaza, which is desert," may be repeated any day, this that had been, happened so by the doing of the Shining One.

But Nesa, upon her return to the Garden House, forgot to tell the little tale to those who would have been most interested. It is vain to question what might have been had she remembered. Well for us that we have a Father who remembers our forgotten stories, gathers up our forgotten prayers and answers them, not according to their poor limitations but according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

CHAPTER IV

I DIE FOR THE SHAME OF IT

ALMOST at once, as it appeared to Seetha, the answer came to that cry of her heart. Raj left India safely, and in a foreign land got good work and sent home money for his family. He began to think of arranging for them to come to him, never, of course, dreaming that he would thereby betray his place of refuge; but, about the time he decided to send for them, distressing letters came, the first describing Seetha's accident; she had fallen from a swing and hurt her back, and the second telling of the death that had overtaken in one way or another five men who had incurred the displeasure of the Power within the shadows.

With that second letter in his hands, Raj stood dismayed. For, as a stone strikes a sheet of plate glass, a terrible thought had struck him, and from that point of fear, across him now were darting new fears, shattering fears. To such a length as this did his enemy's malignity reach? He had been foiled in his purpose where he, Raj, was concerned. What of Seetha? Raj knew what had happened to other men's wives. He could not wait to hear again. He took passage in the first boat sailing to India, and hurried straight home to Seetha.

He found her fragile and frightened. Vague fears haunted her night and day. Raj had some poor hope that the police would have forgotten about him—had he not been for a whole year out

Photo by A. G. Arnot

THE WELL WHICH RAJ JUMPED

The distance across the well, including the two walls, is 23 feet, the walls are 2 feet 3 inches high. The task was all the harder because Raj had to "take off" from the top of the near wall, and clear the one on the other side. The minimum distance which he can have cleared was 21 feet 10 inches, but as he had to clear the far wall a few more inches must be added. (Page 19.)

of India? He had yet to learn that Law never forgets. But in his great anxiety of mind he hovered near the little house where Seetha and his children were, even after he had been driven to understand that he dare not live there. He remembered the fate of a young wife who in her husband's absence had been carried off, her dead body and her child's had been dragged out of the well that he never passed thereafter without a shudder of horror. Desperately now he strove to find a way of keeping near Seetha; but he had to fly to the forest again and watch over her from thence by what poor means he could.

It was a miserable time, for he was ashamed of hiding. In his free honest life in Penang he had not felt like a criminal; now he felt like nothing else.

"I am no robber, it is a poor thing to skulk as if one were a robber; how can I live to the end of my life crouching in holes and corners?" he said to Marut, a herb doctor who often searched for herbs on the foot-hills, and whom he met one day as he was wandering about disconsolately. The two had been schoolfellows, and were devoted friends.

"Yes, it is a despicable thing to continue thus in hiding," agreed Marut unexpectedly, "and quite unworthy of thee. And, whatever the result of surrender, it is wrong to disobey the Yellow Paper. Thou should'st give thyself up, Raj. It is thy duty." Raj winced at that.

Ought he to come in and surrender and tell what he knew of that dacoity of over a year ago? What if he of the far-reaching hand could be persuaded to overlook the offence of the past and, for the sake of justice and mercy, so to direct the course of events that the false case should be withdrawn? That this could be done Raj never doubted. Should he trust to this hope and come in? But the question was settled in the flash of one dreadful second.

He was alone one afternoon in the lower hills, in one of the glens which intersect those lovely places, trying to find comfort in the music of a little brown burn that ran among banks of fern. But water music is powerless when fierce claws are tearing a man's heart-strings, and Raj started up anxiously when a hand pushed the bushes aside and a lad dropped through the fern to the water's edge.

"It is Seetha, they have beaten her," began the boy, and Raj heard all in broken spurts of talk as they raced together down the hill. That morning, said the boy, men from the Native State armed with guns had gone to Raj's father-in-law's house and demanded to see Seetha. Seetha had come to the door, and they had asked her where Raj was. Seetha had said, and truly,

that she did not know. She only knew that he was in the forest. But they said they must know more. Seetha had said she knew no more. She stood before them with her child in her arms, as if his little presence could protect her, and answered their questions, and was turning to go, when one of the men stepped forward.

"Thou liest, O Kamie."

Kama is the Indian Cupid, Kamie is the feminine form. Vile words followed the vile name, and the man snatched at her garments and struck her across the face. She broke from him crying, "Are you not a husband and a father that you can treat me so, me, with my child in my arms? I die, I die, I die for the shame of it!" And at first it seemed that she had died.

But after a while she revived, and a strange quietness held her, and she spoke to those about her of One who was Lord of life and death, the Cooler of our weariness. And she sent no flowers or coco-nuts to be laid by the white shrine under the tree, though many told her that only by doing so could her poor Raj be helped.

And soon her heart beat stronger with the joy of a great relief. For Raj was home again, and surely somehow he would manage to stay near her. But Raj had come at last to know that he had no power to protect his wife; while he stayed out she might at any time have to endure just such attacks as this. He must give himself up and end the search that brought such men to the door. So, not waiting to explain, perhaps he could not trust himself so far, he had hardly come before he was gone. A hurried word or two and he snatched up his children and clasped them in his arms, embraced Seetha—it was a hurried and a desperate embrace that almost crushed her—then with a set face left the house speaking not a word to anyone.

And that night she heard what he did when he left her. And when she heard she cried one cry for Raj, and fell back dead on her mat.

Raj heard of her death on the following night, when for the first time he felt the snap of cold steel on his wrists.

CHAPTER V

THE TRIPLE OATH

RAJ had not expected to feel that snap of steel. In and out through labyrinthine ways he had gone, seeking him who stood within the shadows. And he had found him. There in that place of curtains and mysteries he had fallen on the ground,

stretched his body till it lay like a lifeless thing in the dust, stretched out his hands till his fingers touched the feet of him whom none ever addressed as a mere man, but always by some turn of speech that implied a Personage of power.

And then upon his strained ear sweetest honey words had fallen. He had been graciously commanded to rise, and far more than he had asked was granted. "I, even I, will swear the Oath of the Lamp, the Book and the Child. There shall be no treachery. I swear it," said that very silken voice.

And Raj, ashamed of his contumacy, rose and stood with bowed head and a wondering heart. Had he been mistaken all along? Had he wronged the virtuous by unworthy suspicions? Then the triple oath was sworn.

The lamp upon which that oath is sworn is a polished stem of brass that breaks into flower-like cups for the oil, in each cup lies a lighted wick. Over this innocent shining tree, over the sacred book of the man who swears, and over his eldest child, son or daughter, the threefold oath, once sworn, binds soul and body for ever.

Then the two men stood. "By the lamp, by the book, and by my eldest son," fell the solemn, the irrevocable words, "I swear that I will do no wrong to thee. If I break this oath, may evil overtake my eldest son and ruin him. As an eldest son art thou to me henceforth." And Raj accepted the oath.

They say pitying eyes watched him as he walked unafraid through the house, and out into the early afternoon, for there were some who were apprehensive, but no one dare speak plainly. And it might not have helped if they had; for, among the several names by which Raj had been known throughout his twenty-seven years was one (from the Sanscrit) which means the man of one word, the Truthful, and all through his life he found it hard to distrust his fellow-men.

To the nearest police station he walked then, it was worth the humbling of his pride to win safety such as this. And, saluting the first police officer he met, he surrendered.

"I have done no wrong, except in the matter of ignoring the Yellow Paper," he explained. "I was not in that dacoity in the Village of the Pool, no, nor in any other. I give myself to Law"—of the promise of the triple oath he spoke no word. "All will be well," said Law. And Raj slept that night in peace.

Next morning he was led by his guards along the road to another police station. As the little procession approached the town, he heard a jangle of steel, felt the sharp snap of handcuffs. It was the first shock of disillusionment. It left him stupefied.

CHAPTER VI

THE MAKING OF A CRIMINAL

DAYS crawled slowly into weeks; Raj was neither questioned nor tried. Kept in the cell of the small sub-jail, chained whenever he was taken out, dealt with as a hardened malefactor, all of him was keyed to the tone of a single reiterated *Why?* Just when his bud was perfect and the fruit was ripening in the flower, why this sudden cutting off as with pruning hooks, this cutting down of his branches? And slowly, through the misery of those days and nights, as the rushing winds of startled and violent emotion died down, and his bemused mind became clear in its working, he fitted the fragments of the answer together piece by piece, till he had it complete, a thing of flame.

Yes, it was all clear now, clear as a crag lighted up by a lightning flash. He was doomed to destruction; bound and utterly without defence was he, in the hand of an unappeased enemy. For the charge would be "proved"—a criminal charge, not bailable they told him. What chance had he? What rights had he? What rights has a criminal? Who listens to his voice? So far as Raj knew, no one. He knew of no way to reach anyone who would listen.

Then memories rushed over him like waves driven by raging winds. Time was nowhere now (he was thinking of the events of little over a year before, but they appeared most terribly remote). Was he the man who had waited for the women's call, "A son, a son! To Seetha is born a son!" and hearing it had dashed off to the shrine to lay coco-nuts and flowers at the feet of his god? Could it be he, himself? What had happened before that? What had happened after? On rushed the waves; he could not stay to remember what had happened before; he could only hear through the hurrying winds the shouts of the second messenger who panted as he ran, "Raj! Raj! Raj! The Yellow Paper is out against thee. Flee, Raj! Flee!"

Yes, just as he was turning his happiness over and over, tasting it afresh with every recurring thought, suddenly joy like a frightened child ran from him and was gone.

What of his children now? What was happening to them now? Would a hand be stretched out to ruin them? What of the pretty little daughter? That apprehension, that terror, wrought in him like a delirium. What might not be happening to his children now?

The man, who had crossed the door of that police station a man of good will, ground his teeth and clenched his fists in an agony of fruitless rage.

CHAPTER VII

RAJ ESCAPES

BUT with a mighty effort he restrained himself. Surely he would soon be free. It had been promised. But no, he was taken away privately and questioned. He was told to confess.

He said he had nothing to confess, except his flight when the Yellow Paper was served. Then he learned that crimes had been committed in his name, which he was to confess as his. Was it the Implacable again? "Verily this is his hand," said Raj to himself, but, struggling mightily for patience, he answered quietly:

"But I was in the Forest, in Colombo, in Penang."

"Say thou didst them."

"I will not say so."

"There will be himsa."

"Let there be himsa, I care not. I will not say I did what I did not do."

Then there was himsa. The Sanscrit word means slaughter, pain, affliction. In the part of the country to which the story refers, the word connotes anything unjust done in the name of justice: physical pain inflicted to extort a confession, blackmail, a false charge in court, the removal of small properties or money, insult public or private, vexation, rudeness. The exact shade of meaning is determined by the context. To Raj, standing with his hands tied behind his back, it meant first, flogging.

He persisted in his denial. Then molten wax was dropped on his foot. Still he refused to confess.

"To-morrow there will be the nail and hammer himsa."

"Even so, I will refuse."

The nail and hammer himsa is much dreaded. The foot is held, and a nail or strong thorn is put upon the root of the toe nail and tapped smartly with a small hammer. Few can resist it for long.

Raj's obstinacy angered his examiner. He struck him across the face with his sandal.

With the blow something awoke in Raj. "Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad." It was as if one had set a lighted match to a heap of tinder. A madness of fury seized him.

Before they could get him safe to the district jail, he was gone. With him was a boy, trapped as he had been trapped. Two others, guilty men both, had been in the lock-up with him. It was not a time for nice distinctions. He freed them all. Once in the forest, they were safe.

CHAPTER VIII

OUTLAWED

But, even in the first hot rush for freedom, Raj thought of his children, and turned aside to see them. "Each time he escaped he came first to us. It was very dangerous for him, for the *polees* always came first to our house; but he was fain to see us." Thus Delight, the little daughter, when the longing for her father could only be appeased by letting her talk of him. But he dare not linger, and he tore the children's arms from his neck, and fled from their crying. For days he heard that crying, felt their tears wet on his cheeks. The rending asunder of flesh and spirit astonished him with its anguish. Till then some small gleam of hope may have illuminated his night. Now the last gleam was extinguished. He was an outlaw.

The boy, Chotu, whom he had freed, was an outlaw too. They were what they had never thought of being, never desired to be. They were on the wrong side of that razor edge, the Law. The other two took it calmly. To Raj and the boy it was a thing to tremble at. Why had he not endured just a little longer? Perhaps the truth would have come out. But experience does not work hope where the false case is concerned. He remembered many things and was silent. It was Fate. Where the bull runs its rope follows. Had it not all been written in his forehead before he was born?

For a while Raj tried hard to find a way by which he could live honestly. But wherever he turned, he met the inevitable; as if a man did flee from a lion and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Offended Law in its might and majesty was out against him. How could he prove that the might and majesty of that same Law had been offended by another, before ever he broke into lawlessness? The position was intolerable to one who had been known as the One Word man of his village. He might have escaped to Penang again, and taken up life where he had left it, but something seemed to hold him fast to his own land. It was not only the children, though by this time he knew enough

to know that they would be watched; it was something more. It was land-love that held him and would not let him go. It was the long reaches of water, the streams, the woods, the hills. To this man every mile of plain and forest was dear. Every little nestling village, every mixed smell of those same villages, was as a cord that pulled and bound. But above all, the hills held him fast. To understand how fast, one must have heard for oneself the call of the mountains, that call that is hardly second in compelling power to the call of the great and wide sea. No, he would not leave India. Let the fates deal with him as they would, he would risk all and stay.

Long afterwards, when the famous brigand made such excellent copy that columns about him appeared in the public Press, a suitable beginning being required to such a tale (as its creator confessed afterwards), it was invented: Raj was impoverished by the war; he had been a poacher before, and being strained by poverty was easily moved to crime. But the truth was different. There was no strain of poverty. At the time of his fall a servant, who loved him and clave to him through the painful years that followed, was in charge of his very prosperous home affairs, while he travelled about with the produce of his sugar palms. There was no incentive to crime, no need for it but everything against it, till he was whirled off his feet by the passion that seized him when he was struck in the face, and broke loose, and became in name what he was not by character, a criminal.

If only a wise strong friend had been near at that dreadful hour of decision when the die was cast, how different all would have been. But there was no such one. There were only the two this breaker of jails had set free; and their words were devilish.

CHAPTER XI

A POET'S CORNER AND A MIGHTY KICK

One day, during the interval of uncertainty while Raj was seeking a way to live honestly without leaving his motherless children, he went to a town where he used to do business, and sought out a merchant who had entrusted him with large sums of money, and "never asked for a receipt, for no one asked Raj for receipts," as the merchant's son said in telling the tale. Raj was welcomed, and in the friendliness of the house he forgot his worries and entered into the talk about an expedition to a temple whose annual festival was due next day, and to which

the family was going. Raj said he would go too, he and Chotu together.

"But how?" asked the merchant's son, knowing that Raj and Chotu could hardly march along the roads in broad daylight. "When you arrive in your bullock-cart, we shall meet you there on our feet," laughed Raj. "Look out for us." And to the general amusement that was exactly what came to pass. As the bullock-cart drove up with a flourish and a jangle of bells, Raj and Chotu stepped out to meet it, and they all went together to the back of the temple where scores of earlier arrivals were wandering about talking, or sitting round the cooking fires lighted here and there under the trees. For a religious festival in India is a gigantic picnic, only of course each little coterie cooks apart and feeds apart. Mixing happily in the good-humoured crowd, Raj again forgot his troubles and they all made merry.

That temple is a little, straggling, rather squat structure of hewn stone, stone-flagged, stone-roofed. It is set in the heart of a charming country. Mountains stand almost round it, a sheet of water lies near it, and behind runs a watercourse from whose further bank black rocks rise steeply and lead off straight to the hills. Two huge boulders, curiously shaped like lions, stare at one another; their twin reflections lie across the water. Seen when a large round copper-coloured moon is rising slowly behind palms where the hills open to the east, it is an enchanted land.

Towards evening Raj went in to worship.

Through the small vestibule he walked, through a narrow stone passage, through a square stone hall, to a kind of cell on whose left-hand side behind a grating was a symbol he held sacred. He stopped, and bowed low. It was dark there, but saucers of oil held lighted rags of twisted cotton stuff; the smell of hot oil and the flicker of yellow flames are two of India's many voices to the child of the land. Raj bowed and worshipped.

Before him, as he stood in that cell, was a deep-set door, an unusual arrangement, but the temple is unusual. It is not called after the god whose symbol stands behind the grating and whose name has a beautiful meaning—the holy light of God—but by her name whose symbol waits behind that door. We have our Poet's Corner. So has India. Springing arch, glorious window, or low-browed roof and a darkness lit by a fitful flame—the spirit that informs both is one, even the immortal that feels after something beyond the prose of life, and worships at that secret altar set deep within the soul of man, that stands unshaken by the shocks of life, unless the man himself takes an axe in his hand

and smashes it and bows to the material. Raj had not done this yet; in spite of what was too soon to be, never quite did it. So he stood there now, not as Esau that profane man who sold his birthright, and he pushed the heavy door ajar and stooped and went in.

Before him as he stood in the profounder darkness of that hidden place was a long low barred enclosure, lighted from within by a few small lamps. Hardly at all did they illuminate the symbol of the woman who had written on her slips of palm leaf some say eight hundred, some say a thousand years ago. She had lived by the sounding sea, she had lived in great open spaces; but Raj did not trouble himself by wondering why this woman of the open air should be worshipped in this silent cell; he stood and worshipped her.

He owed much to her. He had crooned her stanzas over and over as a little boy at school, lapping up the sweetness of the sound of the words much as a puppy laps up milk, but bothering his head not at all about their meaning. That meaning had grown upon him as he discovered how difficult it was to carry any single one of the pearly words of wisdom into effect. Raj thought, as all his people think, either in neat moral axioms —he could reel off scores as he stood there, pages of the classics are made of nothing else—or in pictures filmed as it were on the mind, picture-sayings such as his poet's about the golden vase and the earthen pot, whose shards everyone may see in a useless heap outside any Indian village.

"As the shattered fragments of a golden vase," she had said, "continue to be gold though the vessel is hopelessly broken, so the man who is noble by nature continues to be noble though he may be overwhelmed by disaster." She had pointed in contrast to the earthen pot. Shattered Raj was and apparently there was no way of mending himself; but it was his to choose the kind of ruin he would be.

And she had said that there is nothing victorious in violence: "The goad which pierces the elephant's hide fails before cotton-down. The rock which cannot be split by an iron rod yields to the tender roots of the green tree." It is gentleness therefore which is strong. Consciously or unconsciously Raj framed his new life and his robber rules on a pattern suggested by this picture-play of memory, and he made a rosary for himself like the rosary the devotee wears, and every berry on the string was a little word of wisdom gathered from the pictures as they passed. Well for him if he had remembered with equal tenacity and practised with equal fidelity other maxims of his poet, who, when she said,

"Give alms to the poor," did not mean, "Give out of other people's store." But even in his worst days, when it seemed as if he had forgotten nearly all the good she had taught him, Raj opened up his rocks by means of the feeling root of the green tree.

"The custom of robbers is to terrify and beat those whom they rob to inspire them with fear and so get all they have to give. But Raj never did this, and so even the robbed were grateful." In this upside-down way his injured countryside spoke of him afterwards; for great is the patience of India, and whom she loves she forgives.

But alas for the contrasts of life! When Raj shut that little low-set door behind him, and walked back, erect now, to the vestibule of the temple that opened on the road. he walked straight into prose; plain, emphatic, and extremely disreputable prose.

Among the crowd on the road at that hour were two police-constables in plain clothes, or to be accurate, hardly any. One of these undressed persons moved forward now, and seized him by the arm.

"Raj, thou art Raj!"

Raj turned on the man surprised. It was his first arrest. He did not like the feel of it. But the joke in things then as ever danced up to the rescue, and he meekly held out his arms and let the constable bind them with a white cloth. Then he sat down on the stone plinth and chuckled softly to himself. Meanwhile Chotu had been seized in the same way, but Chotu, tampered with, always saw red, and he gripped the stout stick which the constable held in his left hand when he snatched at Chotu with his right: "Wilt free me or shall I give thee a clout on the head?" shouted Chotu. Then, in the twinkling of a second, the crowd, as it ran from all sides round about the door, saw Raj's captor sprawling half-way across the road, and Raj and Chotu with a whoop were flying up the slope behind, and with a leap that was not soon forgotten they were across the watercourse, and standing on the rock behind.

"Hai, you who would catch us," shouted Raj. "Come and catch us if you like! Come and catch us and let us crack your skulls. Hai ho!" and he shouted rough derision after the already disappearing constables, and the people who preferred him to them were naughty enough to laugh. "Why attempt what you could not achieve?" they cried after the two who by this time were out of reach of Raj's impolite remarks. And considering that those two had shown considerable pluck in tackling Raj at all,

this was hardly fair. Then Raj and Chotu disappeared up the rocks and the festival people had food for conversation for many happy days.

To this day the old priests in that temple chuckle: "Oh, the mighty kick, Oh, a mighty kick kicked he!" But it was a bare-foot kick; it did not do the kicked one any deadly harm.

CHAPTER X

RAJ BECOMES THE RED TIGER

On an evening just before the die was cast, Raj went down to the Plains.

There in the light of the setting sun, glowing like a jewel, he saw the red roof of his house set against the dark green of palm and plantain. That little house had been built with great interest and pride; for most of the houses of those villages are thatched with palm leaves, and the red tiles, requiring as they did better timber, had been a matter of prolonged discussion; the memory of the pleasure his father had taken in the almost imperishable wood was quick in him still. He drew nearer, crouching under the cactus hedge as he approached the outskirts of the village. Now he had come to his own street, near his own home; he looked at it and was dumb. Its open doorway gaped. The roof was broken, great gaps showed here and there; the shed roof and the verandah roof were battered in, and the timber had been carried away. Not a child, not an animal stirred in the little compound. The place was a desolation. With bursting heart he gazed at the house that was never more to be home to him, and he raised his hands to heaven in a gesture of despair, and turned sharp to the north towards his father-in-law's village where his children were.

His children—the thought of them quickened the hunger in him for the sight of their faces. So he hastened down the familiar lane, a steep-cut gully between high hedges of cactus, round by the water of a lake, steel-blue now in the twilight, and on till he came to a village, alone on the Plain.

It was dark by now, and the people were indoors. India does not love the dark, it is too full of the movement of dæmons. Unless some lighted and noisy festival is going on, the doors are shut on the life outside the square-built low-roofed cottages that, set anyhow and anywhere, make a jungle village street.

Raj who had walked, as it seemed but yesterday, a fearless

man along this very street, stole from shadow to shadow till he reached a house that wore a frightened look as it sat there, with never a glimmer in the night. Close under the thatch he stood, and tapped at the door. It opened carefully.

"It is I, O father of my wife."

"Thou indeed, O husband of my daughter?"

And with hands that fumbled over the fastenings of the lock, the old man opened the door. "Softly, softly, there be watchers. There be listeners!" Softly, softly Raj slipped in. Then there was a low call, a rush of light-running feet, and his children were in his arms. For a little while no one spoke. No one could speak, for the strong man broke down for once, and wept, and the children cried for sympathy. Even the valiant little son, unused to tears, cried till his father wiped the tears away with his big gentle hand, gentle as a woman's to his last day.

Then they brought the baby from his swinging hammock, and the boy's eyes filled again as his father wept afresh at the sight of the child so like the dead mother, and they talked together in muffled whispers: but there was nothing glad to talk about, and at last the father nerved himself for the parting. Then the lamp was blown out, and the door opened, and leaving behind him a little sobbing heap of distress, he slipped out into the night.

But what lay before him now?

His seven strong bulls had been sold to get ready money for his defence. And now there could be no defence. His flight, as he knew now, would help to prove his guilt. And, were further proof required, he knew to within a few rupees how much it would cost to supply it; for it is no fiction, but just fact, that in India evidence is a thing bought and sold like any other valuable, only more privately, and he who can bid most gets it.

Quietly, but with a burning in him like the burning of a slow fire that might leap into flame at any moment, Raj thought of all these things; thought of the triple oath; of the snapping down of the teeth of the trap; of the smiting on the face with the sandal; of the smiting of the woman, his wife; of the insults poured on her, more cruel than any smiting, as she stood with her child in her arms at the door of the little house; of that house made desolate; of the malevolence that would pursue him to the last ditch, even as it had pursued and overtaken the hapless five. What gave power to the evil to work evil? *Gold.* And his soul revolted against this tyranny of gold.

Then the fire in him leaped up; and from the double flame, indignation against stark injustice and a desperate sense of

impotence, was born the thought that to take from the rich and give to the poor cannot be called a sin. Blindly, confusedly, he argued with himself, the best in the man rising up in protest, the despair in him pulling down. He was Raj the Truthful to the end, but he took for his brigand name another, less worthy; let men call him the Red Tiger; the very name would strike terror in the hearts of the rich and fearful travellers on the road. So he became the Red Tiger, and what had become of Seetha's prayer?

PART II

Others may sing of the wine and the wealth and the mirth,
The portly presence of potentates goodly in girth :—
Mine be the dirt and the dross, the dust and scum of earth.

Theirs be the music, the colour, the glory, the gold ;
Mine be a handful of ashes, a mouthful of mould.
Of the maimed, of the halt and the blind, in the rain and the cold—
Of these shall my songs be fashioned, my tales be told.

JOHN MASEFIELD.

CHAPTER I

THE TIGER'S COUNTRY

AND now Raj flung himself into his new life with a zest that astonished all who had known him as an honest sugar merchant. And never was a country that lent itself more willingly to crime.

For the mountains that sweep in half-circles to the sea are threaded with little valleys, and deep ravines, and secret recesses. Raj knew every hidden cave in them. He had been a keen hunter in old days, and had a hunter's sense of direction, and he was wise in woodcraft. He could find his way anywhere : given the lowest bush, merest outcrop of rock, he could efface himself, and you might look, but you would not see him. He trained his followers so that one moment they could be robbing a cart on the road, and the next—where ? For the roads are often bordered by great old trees, and sometimes immense tumbled rocks are near, and they lead up at once to the hills.

Then for retreat, what a land of desire that country was with its depth of primeval forest and countless caves ! A tropical forest is commonly considered unsafe for men at night; but Raj knew his namesake's lair among the elephant grass on the lower slopes. The panther who leaps from the bough overhead, the big black monkey, with a horde of lion-tails at his back, who will dare to attack man and is feared even by forest folk—they were nothing to him. Even the red dog who hunts in packs and tears out the throat of his quarry was of no account. " He fears not even Red Dog," the people would say in awe-struck

tones when they heard the hunting yell of the pack, a noise which carries far and frightens men at night. And however wet the woods (and round the wet twigs in those woods coil flat-headed snakes, which are always poisonous, and may be deadly) he would push his way through, thrusting back the branches with his bare hands as if snakes were his sisters. And once he trod on a cobra, which, as his foot lifted, rose and spread its hood; but Raj went on unstruck. He heeded the cobra as little as the python that straddled across the path like a huge rope with gleaming eyes, or the inoffensive elephants or bison that roamed through the swamps and level parts of the forest, or the innocent sambhur that browsed on the fine grass in the open glades and the young leaves on the budding trees. So men began to say he wore a charm, and his many escapes from under the very eye of the law bore them out in this. He began to be counted as something more than mere man, and the legends that grew up round him did not help the law in the business of his capture.

Nor was that event forwarded by his extraordinary character. He would turn a robbed victim into a friend for life, and did so constantly. Only those robbed by his men became his foes, and even some of them he won to affection by that mixture of courage and gentleness, friendliness and fun, that distinguished him wherever he went. And then there were continually quick freaks of contrition, and the robbed gold would be returned with apologies, and Raj would order his men to escort the amazed people safely over the frontier, "for there be many robbing in my name." Mercies like these shut men's mouths.

For Raj made a new game of robbing, and sometimes the grosser element of his band gave trouble.

"Blacken my name, wilt thou, thou jackal?" and he would drop with a heavy hand on a ruffian who had taken a woman's marriage token, the golden trinket which hangs round the neck from a golden chain. "Take anything thou wilt, but touch not that."

But there is a true story which shows his taking the token. He was on the road one day, when a cart passed with a young wife and her old husband sitting inside. Raj stopped the cart. Instantly the husband disappeared into the bushes near the road, leaving his young wife to face Raj alone. Raj asked for her jewels, which she gave him, retaining only her marriage trinket. But Raj had other ideas.

"Lady," he said, "that old husband of yours is a rank coward. Instead of standing by you to protect your person and

property, he has run away. The marriage token of such a coward does not deserve to be on your neck."

He had stern ways with his men. Vina, one of his band, was distinguished by a dreadful ruthlessness. One day even in Raj's presence he seized a woman and began to tear off the jewels and to threaten to drag her away. " Hands off," shouted Raj, beside himself with fury, " Hands off, thou villain—or I shoot." And Vina drew off. Then Raj rated him soundly and gave him a lesson in polite robbing.

" Kindly give us thy jewels," he said to the woman, " we have need of them." And she gave them. She went home and told of it, saying (and all agreed with her), " What did the loss matter in comparison with the horror of insult ? " And Vina, thus roughly disciplined, mended his manners.

To the end of the chapter Raj was the same, a champion of women, and ready with a heavy hand to come down upon cowardly men. The old husband, who left his wife to face Raj alone, met his punishment in the town to which he belonged ; not a tongue but pointed the moral. There was another husband who, in the days when the hunt for Raj was at its height, took his medicine from the same fearless hand. This man had deserted his wife, who was mourning and longing for his return. Raj went to him. He was a man of good position (even as the old man had been) ; but Raj cared for none of these things. He warned him that if he did not give up his evil ways and behave properly to his wife he, Raj, would see to him, a threat that could bear several unpleasant interpretations.

He strictly forbade night robbing. " Nay, that is common thieving. What is it to me if it be profitable ? It is deceit ; it is vile. Why take an unfair advantage over them even if they be rich ? It is their business to guard their women. If they hang jewels on them like the red figs on the banyan " (no hyperbole, a woman will carry as much as two hundred pounds worth of gold in chains, earrings, necklets, and bangles, most tempting bait to dangle before a robber's eyes), " then verily it is their own look-out if we take them. But touch not their stuff at night."

Ballads were written about the Red Tiger, and dedicated to Krishna. They called him the Daylight Robber, the gallant, the courageous, hero of heroes, brave of the braves, and many other foolish praiseful names, for his pluck and daring had glamoured them ; " Come, ye dancing children, hearken to the tale of him who scorns to rob at night." All over the country, in a rhythmic dance played with striking of sticks together, children sang these ballads which were sold in the trains and on the roads in spite of

efforts to stop them. All this was sweet incense to Raj. His robber shout, "Hai-ho the Red Tiger!" was hardly ever resisted. But people tell how sometimes in the midst of a successful raid it was as if compunction had suddenly seized him and he would stop, and hold back his men, or run to help someone up who had fallen, or even, incredible as it may sound, comfort someone who was crying. "Let him be," he said once to Chotu about a merchant whom that lusty youth had seized, "Let him be." "To thee every man is a brother," grumbled Chotu, sore at the loss of a handful of rupees.

But the riff-raff of the country found him out and gathered round him. He led a band in the adjoining Native State, and became known as a dacoit—dacoity is gang robbery. In British India fifteen or more called him Chief. The boy, Chotu, whom he had set free, was his devoted follower. This boy was not riff-raff, but he was well on the way to become a very accomplished young scamp; for the unkind fates had not softened his naturally dare-devil nature, and he was too readily shaping to the life of crime to which, as it seemed, he had been driven by irresistible powers.

CHAPTER II

THE TIGER'S WAYS

THREE years later, when two thousand rupees were offered as reward for the capture of Raj and Chotu, a caste man, belonging to a town on one of the roads where in those days Raj had robbed with his band, met a Christian schoolmaster, and said to him:

"If only the Sirkar would make Raj the head of the police, how good it would be! Then we should have justice done to all. We should have the poor protected." And at the same time, looking upon the matter from an opposite angle, a letter to the Press remarked that the easiest solution of the problem of what to do, as he could not be caught, would be to proclaim a free pardon to the Red Tiger and promise him employment in the detective department. "Would that he were appointed to look after the well-being of the people!" It was the general lay talk till it was effectually silenced, and it contrasted oddly with the official.

And now in these early days, sitting on the raised plinth round the sacred fig-tree in the evenings, men discussed him; and so did the women sitting round the little fires in their secluded kitchens. And the talk would fill books. The stories grew, of

course, as they passed from mouth to mouth. There was one that showed him facing a heartless husband with the question, "Lovest better thy wife or thy money?" When the man, hoping it would be spared to him, said, "My money," the Red Tiger promptly carried both wife and money off. The wife he took to her own home, and to her father he said, "Take care of her. He is not fit to have a wife."

The seed from which this flower of fancy sprang was in truth sown by the father himself:

"My daughter is unhappy," he had said to Raj, "her husband is cruel. Canst thou make peace?"

So Raj went to the house of that man, and in his friendly way put before him the happiness of peace at home. The man listened unkindly. He had no heart of love towards his wife, and he made her life hard to live. Raj waited a little; then, finding he continued cruel, he carried the wife off and gave her to her father.

One day, where the road forks down to the sea, Raj and his men waited for the coming of a bandy said to be full of richly jewelled women. It proved, however, to be empty, save for one woman, whose husband did as the other husband did; he hurriedly departed. Raj's men gave chase, and brought him to their Captain.

"You coward, you skunk, you abject insignificant insect, you could leave your wife to fall into our hands!" and Raj gave the unfortunate man a mighty shake. "Take him, O brothers, and teach him his manners." And nothing loath, they did so, with good sounding smacks that sent him howling to his cart.

Up in the forests there are thousands of acres of valuable trees. There are guards appointed for their protection, but certain of the people on the Plains are interested in that timber, and have ways known to themselves of appropriating it. In a great tract of forest where many young teak trees grow (young teak which can easily be cut down and slipped off), the saplings continued to disappear in spite of the forest guards, who, fearing they would be fined, called Raj.

"Set a watch," they said, "and see that these thieves of the Sirkar's property take no more of it and, if it may be, catch them for us. Our pay will be docked if this goes on. "Raj was loyal to the Sirkar (Government of India), highway robber though he was, and he resented this pilfering of Government property. So he and his men lay in ambush among the rocks, and, springing up as the gang of thieves were dragging the young saplings off, they caught them red-handed.

There was a wild scuffle in the depths of that forest then. The men were soon one on top of the other, his and theirs in an indistinguishable heap of struggling arms and legs.

"Who is on top? Who is on top?" Raj shouted, and one of his men shouted back, "I am below." He shot then, meaning to cripple the thief on top, but at that moment the heap upheaved, and the shot struck his own man.

This man, Undu, the Rat, was of the meanest, and no loss to the band ("Afflictive indeed is friendship with the uncongenial," says the reputed brother of Raj's favourite woman poet). Nobody fretted much about the Rat as he crawled down the hill, and it did not occur to Raj that Undu would bear a grudge against him. But the wounded robber, now easily caught, was soon arrested, and, filled with rancour, turned King's evidence. So the Red Tiger's robberies were the least of his iniquities. It was only by mere good luck that he had not murdered a man. "A ruffian, a picturesque ruffian if you like, but dangerous for all that"—that was Raj.

His crimes were black enough. All along the mountains his name was known as a brigand chief. He would watch with his band for the rich women who went on pilgrimage to the temple a thousand feet up in the forest. These he would "politely request" to remove their chains and bangles. That polite request, quoted all over the country as the characteristic trait in this new kind of brigandage, was rarely resisted. Especially he loved to lighten them of the necklets made of sovereigns which everywhere are coveted. Then he would go to the main road, and wait for the rice-carts which brought in rice from distant fields to the less fertile parts of the country. He would calmly ask the men its price, never condescending to bargain, but always accepting the price as it stood; so sellers of rice approved of him.

He would wait while it was measured out, and then pay in full, or tell them where to go to get their money; and no one ever trusted him and was deceived. His men would carry the sacks off then, and distribute the rice to the poorest of the poor. When he robbed it was his custom to say, "Go to the police and tell them this is the Red Tiger's work," and this new and provoking kind of crime was more dangerous to the community than if it had been more ordinary in procedure, for its very unusualness, the contrition mixed up so perplexingly in it, and, above all, the coolness and courage and dash that baffled everybody, made a most unwholesome halo for the robber captain. It was all as bad as it could be for Raj, who was only a man who

might have been a power on the side of right, fast hastening towards destruction. For about a year, quick with excitement and the thrill of escape, he lived scatheless. Flying from the roads in the dusk of the evening he would lead his men up the crags and into the heart of the forest by the light of moon or stars. And in the wild beasts' world he made home for them all.

CHAPTER III

THE POINTING FINGER MUST BE CUT OFF

"THE pointing finger must be cut off." Or, "Will not the pointing finger be cut off?" It is one of India's wisest sayings. It is not an obsolete proverb. To prove it, let anyone, however reluctantly, however loyally, dare to touch upon wrong entrenched in the Authority of his day and generation; let his eye be never so single, let his only urging be pity for the suffering of those that have no helper, even so, let him open his mouth for the dumb, and there will be a wounding and a grieving. The pointing finger must be cut off.

But let the pointing finger belong to an outlaw to begin with, and what fate but cutting off can possibly be expected? Raj, for all his wrongdoing, stood forth as the single figure that dared to stand and point. He spoke openly of himsa. And openly he carried a gun to protect himself from it. He regarded police guns not as defence for the innocent, but simply as butt-ends, by which men might be clubbed to make them confess to sins they either had or had not committed. He knew of the himsa in which two men stand one on each side of the victim and simultaneously prod him with those same butt-ends in such a way that the pain conveyed is the maximum that can be inflicted by that method. He knew of the hot brick pressed between the hands tied behind a man's back and the bare skin over his spine; of the needles thrust into the quick of the nail to extort confession—and no one who has seen the haunted face of the man who has endured this himsa, either in its least form, the one needle hisma, or in any of its ascending degrees up to that known as the twenty needle himsa, can ever be as one who has not seen. He knew, too, of the red-hot wire run into the ear, of the tying of the feet to a beam with the head held over the smoke of a fire in which chillies had been thrown.

All this and more he knew, as all who live on the floor of India know, and he openly spoke of it, cried aloud to the heavens that

never seemed to hear, said—" Is it right? Is it just? " and sometimes it was only the withholding mercy of God that came between him and deadly crime; that, and the love of fair play that was planted deep within him, for he could not strike those whom he held responsible for these things, and their instruments were less guilty. But the days were so full of his own wrong-doing that there was little room left for influences that made for goodness or forbearance, and twice Raj was nearly involved in darker crime than had dyed his hands as yet.

The first time was when Delight was hurt. She was then a motherly girl of eight, burdened always by the anxiety of a motherless child with younger brothers whose well-being is a constant care. She was looking after the baby one evening, when two forms of fear approached the cottage.

" Where is thy father? "

" I do not know."

" Thou *dost* know. Tell us, or we will beat thee."

But Delight did not know, nor would she have told if she had known. The boy was snatched up then and carried off and questioned.

" When was thy father last here? " But he turned solemn eyes on his questioners. No one has discovered the way to make that boy speak if he does not intend to do so. He shook his head, then apparently thinking better of it, said, " He was here to-morrow."—It was not bluff, he was too small for that, and it did not occur to them that he meant " yesterday." So they gave him up, and returned to the sister. They tore her jewels off, and a blow with a butt-end of a gun threw her senseless on the floor. The old grandparents raised the death-wail; the neighbours who had scurried away to their dark little houses at the sight of the men with guns now rushed out, forgetting their fear for Delight's sake; she was lifted into the old grannie's lap, and the bleeding head was plastered with a gruesome paste. Nothing can efface the fear of that day from her mind. At the sight of a gun she shrinks away like a wounded animal.

The second time was when the old grandfather was taken and beaten so that he all but died. His friends took him to hospital then, and he says, with the queer twisted patience of the old, " Yes, they healed me. But when it came to paying for my sore bones I had to pay for them myself. It was told me that there was an inquiry, and someone paid something to some-one, but to whom, how should I know? About thirty rupees (two pounds) was the sum. It was a fine. I wish," he adds reflectively, " I greatly wish it had been paid to me."

These things reached Raj. He was sportsman enough then and afterwards to realize that Law had to catch him if it could. But this was not in the bond, and it did not make him more respectful towards the powers that be. He had never seen those powers as we of other lands know them, or as those know them in India who live where the heads of the various orders move, each in his lighted orbit. For him, as for countless thousands, the powers meant only those men who push their unwanted way into the frightened villages that shiver at the sight of them; for the dreaded "false case" hangs like a double-edged sword over every man in such a community who has in any way offended the powerful of his neighbourhood. And the hair that holds that sword from falling is only a bit of silver wire that may snap at any moment. No, Raj had scant regard for the powers, as distinguished from the ultimate head. He thought of that mysterious being much as he thought of the Deity standing far back behind the lesser gods. If he could only reach the Great all would be well. And he continually tried to appeal direct. But he soon discovered that, just as he found the Deity elusive, inaccessible, when, pressed by a sense of the unsatisfactory nature of his dealings with the lesser gods, he tried to press through to the Enthroned, so the human Great receded when he sought to press through by the only way he knew; and beaten back on himself he grew reckless, and took a mad pleasure in provoking those whose business it was to stop his lawlessness.

Once he had the good fortune and the audacity to catch one of them out. That story, shouted by the delighted women, was all over the country within an hour of its happening.

For one day Raj and his band, waiting behind the boulders that just there line the road, saw a man dash out upon a passing cart, and heard him shout, "Ho! I am the Red Tiger. Give me your jewels."

This was milk-and-honey to the captain, who signed to his men to keep quiet, while the fraud held the bullock-cart driver and ordered the women to undo the clasps of their gold trinkets and peel off their numerous bangles.

Raj waited grimly till this was accomplished, and his men, quivering with eagerness, held themselves still till he gave the signal.

Then with a roar and a howl and the very snarl of the tiger himself, Raj was on top of that man, and his men were tying him up. The women found their hands filled with their jewels almost before they realized what had happened, and heard Raj's voice, very quiet (he had the quietest of speaking voices), say

to them, "He is a degenerate policeman. Take him to the police station." And the trussed-up wretch was tossed into the little seat beside the driver, and off went the cart, the gayest of the gay.

In ways like this, annoying ways, Raj pointed the finger. And to point is the unpardonable sin.

CHAPTER IV

ON SPECIAL DUTY

AND he laughed. This was galling for, in spite of knowing, as he must have known, that if he were caught he would pay for it, Raj continued to regard the means taken for his arrest as a huge joke, and sometimes he would go to the police station got up in some ridiculous disguise, and give valuable information about that elusive beast, the Red Tiger; and sometimes he would appear as a fellow-detective, sent on special duty. There was no end to his vexing devices, and the people, who unfortunately nowhere love the Force, laughed with him.

"Lo, he comes."

"Hush! Breathe not."

It was Raj to his men who were drawn round a table set out in the middle of the road far from any town. On the table a candle burned unsteadily, blown about in the night air. The men sat drinking, playing cards, and talking. A gun lay across the table. The bullock-cart trailing along the dark road drew nearer.

"Stop! Who goes there?"

It was the leader of the cheerful drinkers who called out the command and the question, and his men held up the cart and carefully examined its contents, as if they did not know exactly what they were, an unbeloved Inspector, and his gun.

"I am on special duty," explained the leader of the group round the table. "I thought your honour might most happily be Raj the brigand." And he saluted, and the cart went on. In the flickering light of a candle lapses in uniform do not stare one in the face. There was nothing to betray the revellers who smothered their feelings till the cart was out of hearing. Then they had a royal time. Life was worth living that night.

And again—and this happened at noon close by a country town with its police station at that hour most busily buzzing—a diligent officer bicycled past, and stopped to ask a quiet-looking

man by the wayside if he had seen anything of the notorious brigand who was reported in the neighbourhood. The man answered civilly that he imagined he might be under a bridge not far away; he had seen somebody lying on a stone as he passed. Would the police officer kindly give him a pinch of snuff? This was obligingly given, the civil man salaamed, and off went Bicycle. And off went Tiger. But the man under the bridge was annoyed.

Much more annoyed was Sakuni, another official, whom for certain good reasons Raj had determined to harry. Raj had no opinion of reptile ways; stinging from below, or stabbing in the back, either metaphorically or otherwise, had no attraction for him; but how reach Sakuni who was a very great person and far out of reach of a mere brigand chief? He turned this matter over in his mind, and at last hit upon a plan which satisfied his sense of the fitness of things.

One hot afternoon saw him and his men settled behind the boulders near the Split Rock, one of his favourite rendezvous. Presently there was a placid jangle of bullock bells and a bullock-cart moved into the picture, its driver half asleep, its occupants more than half asleep, its bulls walking in their sleep.

With a whoop and a shout of "Ho! the Red Tiger!" his men were out on the road. The cart stopped. Raj advanced, and the women hurriedly poured their jewels into his hands outstretched to receive them.

"Descend, O women." And they tumbled out.

A cloth was spread on the bank by the roadside. Raj dropped his handfuls of gold and silver trinkets on the cloth, bundled it up, and tied it at the corners.

"Now, just as swiftly as may be, go to Sakuni and say to him, 'This is the Red Tiger's work.' Give him a list of the jewels."

"Fear not, I will take good care of them," he called after the cart as the driver, now wide awake, urged on his bulls. Neither he nor the women had the remotest idea of what the game was, and exceedingly dreaded any kind of interview with Sakuni, but who disobeyed the Red Tiger? About their jewels the women had no anxiety, but how he would carry this mad prank off thoroughly perplexed them. What was Raj going to do? How get those precious things back to them? And what in the name of common-sense possessed him? They knew Raj, for they were from a village where one of his men had a married sister, and, after the first moment of panic before they recognized him, they were too muddled by the unexpectedness of his proceedings to have sense to ask questions. Not that that mattered. They

would not have been answered. So, as mystified as they were intended to be, they did as they had been bidden to do, and the carts trundled on.

But Sakuni was not to be found, and, secretly much relieved, they returned to the Split Rock where Raj was waiting.

He asked them if they had honestly tried to find Sakuni, for he appreciated their reluctance to appeal to that particular arm of the law. They assured him they had, and he believed them. "Come, retrieve your treasures," he said, and each hunted through the bundle till she had found her finery to the last toe-ring.

So the joke Raj had hoped for did not come off, and it was disappointing. He had imagined a much more exciting end to the story. What a thoroughly good joke it would have been to wait till Sakuni and his men arrived, then snatch up the bundle of jewels, scramble up the hill behind the Split Rock, wave his booty in their disgusted faces, and disappear with it into the hidden cave of which they knew nothing. The women would have been charmed; the countryside would have laughed. What a joke to embroider round the camp-fire in the evening! Well, better luck next time, he told himself. But when next time came, the luck was all on the other side. Sakuni had heard of it, and he had an excellent memory.

CHAPTER V

FAME

But the most scandalous of Raj's pranks was played by means of three or four uniforms borrowed from the Native State which knew Raj so well. Thus arrayed, he and his men appeared at an outlying village and hurried the police stationed there in different directions to arrest, if possible, the Red Tiger and his band who, as he correctly informed them, had been seen quite lately somewhere in their near neighbourhood. When they had gone, Raj swiftly appropriated two rifles, and joined the pursuit. From this he went on "to inspect" another posse of police. He never stayed long enough anywhere to arouse suspicion, but played his short game to a finish, and then was a sadhu and lolled along the road and begged from his hunters as they returned empty-handed, or a pedlar, trudging patiently to market; or anything else that struck his fancy.

Once he was almost caught. He and Chotu were alone that

day and the village was being searched. There was no way out, and no way of staying in. A stack of straw stood near the house where they were. They bought it as it stood, plucked enough of it to make two huge loads such as coolies carry on their heads; the pendent mass covers most of the man. Laden thus they slouched out, their meek and vacant faces, for Raj acted the part he wished to play whether he was being observed or not, well buried in the straw.

Sometimes the band was unexpectedly recruited. One day they came upon an old man sleeping under a tree by the roadside. He looked as if he might have something worth taking tucked in the fold of his single garment, a sheet of white cotton worn folded round the waist. One of the band stooped over and touched him on the shoulder.

The old man started up alarmed. "Give what is in thy waist cloth!"

"Alas!" said the old man, "I have come from far, I am a poor man seeking the Red Tiger."

"And wherefore?" demanded the Tiger himself, coming forward and more than a little ashamed, for he was not out to worry the poor.

"The talk has reached us that he is merciful to the poor who are in adversity. I am poor and I am in adversity; and so I sought him."

This pleased Raj immensely; and after that he used to go in disguise to markets to hear what the people were saying, till he grew to think it a fine thing to be known as Raj the Tiger, friend of the poor; and the false fame killed the shame that had been in him at first, and the ballads sung about him began to sound good in his ears.

He had ways of his own for discovering who was worth helping. One day a man was robbed by his band, and he begged to be allowed to keep a part, as he wanted it for his son's wedding. It was to buy the marriage-token, he said. Raj returned it. "But at the wedding thou must say that I did this," he told the man, who promised he would. And he kept his promise; before all the guests he told the tale and named Raj as, in a sense, the giver of the marriage-token. Presently he felt a touch on his arm, and turning, saw a stranger arrayed in the garments of a wedding-guest. "Thou art a true man," said a voice in his ear that he recognized. "Thou shalt never be troubled by me."

CHAPTER VI

THE BANYAN-BORDERED ROAD

By this time Raj had become a menace to the peace of the district. He dared the police to catch him. He helped himself to what he chose, no man (effectually) forbidding. He was an out-and-out brigand, and none of the stories of his curious kindness or contritions, still less of his outrageous defiance of Authority, are meant for a moment to give an impression of half-heartedness in his chosen career. And yet, for it is the way of India, the kind little things he continually did washed out like a wet sponge the reckoning of the slate. And some among the castes he most wantonly attacked became his most fervent friends.

One day, in a Government hospital near the mountains, the assistant-surgeon died, and his widow, not unjewelled, for to unjewel was not the custom of her caste, prepared to travel back to her own country.

The road which led over the frontier was perfect for robber purposes. Great old banyans bordered it for miles. Their roots were of the longest and thickest; they made dusky brown rooms with walls that swept the ground like skirts; and over the interlaced tops of those trees one might walk as on house roofs; Raj loved that road. And now the bullock-cart with its tempting bunch of jewelled women lumbered slowly into sight, and Raj stood forth. The cart was driven by a drowsy servant-boy with his inadequate bits of rope for reins, and for whip a stick with a piece of twine tied to the end of it. To Raj's polite but imperious demand, the widow wept and said, "Alas, I am but lately widowed." And the heart of Raj smote him. "Forgive me," he said gently, "forgive me. Not one of my band shall touch thee or thy friends. But there are some who are robbing in my name. We shall see thee safe to the frontier." And this he did, walking alongside her cart, he and his men, till they came to the mountain pass which marked the boundary.

One day an old man who had been kind to Raj when he was a boy passed down the same banyan-bordered road, and Raj was out for loot that day, so his band stopped the traveller.

"What need of rings? Give the gold ring!"

The old man took his heavy gold ring off his finger, but, catching the name of the boy he had once known well and greatly loved, he cried it aloud reproachfully.

And Raj heard it. Quick shame overwhelmed him. He came forward and fell at the old man's feet.

"O pardon, pardon!" he cried as he returned the ring and touched the old man's feet in reverent obeisance.

It was often so. The lightest appeal to the best in him woke instant response. He would stop, those who knew him say, and shame would sweep over him in a hot flood. It was so one day when he hailed a cart full of Brahman women who were going to worship in a temple near the mountains. Raj, to whom the rich were always fair game, ordered the driver to stop.

One of the women looked out, and saw Raj. She knew the futility of expostulation, and called out (lest by coming near his shadow should fall on her or any of the women and ceremonially defile their caste), "Stay, brother, stay! Wait there." And she waved her hand towards a place at a little distance. "I will throw the jewels down and thou canst pick them up." But she had used a word for brother that connotes protector, and appeals to any sense of chivalry a man may possess.

"Brother, do you call me?" Raj cried abashed, addressing her by the highest honorific he knew, and drawing back at once. And he begged her pardon and the pardon of all who were in the cart, and, as he had escorted the widow, so he escorted the Brahmans, till they came to a place where there was no fear of anyone giving them trouble.

Sometimes his men were much annoyed by these scruples, and attempted argument; but he would have none of it. He was captain of his band and, save on one disastrous day when they broke loose and plunged into iniquity which steeped his name in pitch, they obeyed him, wild and wicked as some of them were. "For he had a way with him," said one of them once. "Not one of us dared cross him or wanted to do so. Only such as Undu the Rat hated him and worked him evil. And we loved him. He would turn a rough word with a kind one. He bound us to himself. Look at Druti." Druti was a lad who had once robbed with Raj, but had given it up. When, later on, Raj escaped from jail, this boy risked capture to wait on him. He could have enriched himself by betraying him, but he would have given his life for him.

Before his day of freedom ended Raj took many an opportunity to warn off others who would have joined his band, drawn by the stories of adventure, and the glorious lure of fun. "If they only knew how much naughtier I might be than I am, they wouldn't be so hard on me," said a very naughty small child once, when she was called upon to pay the price of her transgressions. When Raj's story began to open out, there were times when that view of things seemed to have something in it. But,

of course, the law of the land has nothing to do with such follies.

Among Raj's countless friends was his cousin, a strapping young fellow called Pon, who was a student of magic and of music, a curious combination but full of interesting possibilities. Pon was often called to play his stringed instrument when there was special worship at the village shrines. Sometimes he became entranced, and that strange demonic possession known as the afflatus came upon him, and he saw visions and spoke as an oracle. Between these seasons he was just a big jolly frank-faced man, not at all unlike Raj in face and in character, and not unlikely to be drawn from honest ways by a kind of perverted romance. For this giving to the poor was a thing to be praised, and Pon almost forgot the sin that was in it as he saw suffering people relieved from distress, and heard their acclamations of Raj.

But one day when Raj called at Pon's house he said to him, "Never think of it. We are destroyed, it is too late for us; but keep thou from our ways. They are wicked ways. Keep from them." And Pon, touched and enlightened, did keep from them. But he saw no harm in having Raj to a meal occasionally; like scores of others he welcomed him whenever he had a chance. And the natural sequel followed. He spent his all and more, some three thousand rupees, in trying to clear his own good name from the false charges brought against him. And soon afterwards there fell upon Raj the first sharp smiting of the rain that was to cause the hidden seed of Seetha's prayer to stir and move up towards the light.

In the forest that Raj knew so well, in shady places after rain, the little fungus, dictyophora, lifts herself like a surprise from among the dead leaves that cover the ground. You see at first a small brownish-purple head, rising slowly yet perceptibly till it stands on a slender, pure white, half-transparent column. Round the neck, as it were, is the beginning of an orange-coloured frill, an immature turnover tucker. This grows as she rises, extends all round and opens into a net, through which you may see the fragile white column. Sometimes the net falls evenly, sometimes it is as if an elf of the woodland were gathering up her little skirts for a dance. But in a few hours she tires, and you look and cannot find her. The dead leaves cover her as if she had never been.

If Seetha knew the little net-bearer—and as the people of the mountain-foot villages know their forests it is not unlikely that she did—she must have wondered at the quick uprising and still quicker perishing of this child of the woods. And yet had she

known more she would have been sure that what she took for death was only life in another form. There is no such thing as a perishing anywhere. There is no such thing, she knows it now, as a perishing of prayer.

And through the days that were to come, when hope sprang up only to fade and fall, and the men and women who prayed for Raj saw nothing but the grave of hope covered and overspread as by withering leaves of forest trees, it was good to remember the little net-bearer. Let the rain fall (and there are many kinds of rain in God's world), and the life under the leaves will awaken.

CHAPTER VII

TRAPPED

NEAR the mountains which skirt the southern plain is a country town, ancient and sacred. Kings have fought for that town, and legends of the deeds of gods and men hang about it like the breath of incense. The name by which it was formerly known was the Joyous City.

Round about the Joyous City the mountains stand in a great half ring; in the rains a waterfall races down the rocks, and though in heat the river flowing to the Plains becomes a trickling stream, there is always water in the Joyous City, and its palms are always fruitful. Straying as it wills on the plain between the mountains and the wide and pleasant rice fields, the little old city lives as it has lived for ages, sufficient unto itself, a little city of pictures and memories.

To it came Raj in the height of his fame, made over-confident by his many escapes, and careless of his safety. He stayed with a friend whom he believed to be true. But that friend wanted to keep to himself money which Raj had committed to his care, and he wanted the Government reward offered for the capture of Raj. So he promised to betray his friend, and thus hoped to secure both by a stroke.

Raj, never thinking a doubtful thought of the man who had welcomed him so warmly, appears to have given little heed to any danger signals. He went out morning by morning in the most open way to a coffee shop in the town, where sitting calmly among any who chanced to come, he had coffee and rice-cakes. And evening by evening he went to the river and played a kind of hockey, and organised sports for the boys of the place, football, long jumps, and walking on stilts across the river, just then

shallow; and never, incredible as it sounds, concerned himself in the least about the intentions of the police officers in charge of that part of the country who were gathering up their forces from the towns round about till they had men enough to surround the house where Raj was staying, and by night, while he slept, fall upon him and carry him off.

One night his friend made a feast, and after it was over, jovial and care-free, Raj turned into the side-room appointed, and slept in peace. How he could be so care free, no one can say; but he had never betrayed another, and, though he had been betrayed once, he seemed as incapable of suspicion as of fear.

That night the sign was given. The house was surrounded. The false friend opened the door. Raj was taken in his sleep. He was overpowered at once and bound and taken to a room thereafter odious to him and his. A table stood in that room. He was forced to stretch out his leg on the table; then certain men were told to strike it with their staves. They stopped before the bone was broken, and flung him into a cell.

The furious hours raced over him. They were fiercer now than even when for the first time he found himself behind bars with handcuffs on his wrists. That false friend, oh to have him for one red-hot minute in his hands! Somehow or other he must get at him; he should live to regret that he had dared to cheat the Red Tiger. Yes, he would get at him yet, and stamp on him as one stamps on a squirming centipede; the ears of men would tingle as they heard of that revenge. And he traversed dark roads as he brooded over the form his vengeance would take. He would escape as he had before. He would go swiftly and lay offerings at the feet of his special dæmon, Life of Wild Places, and implore his help.

That dæmon, Life of Wild Places—but had he been true to him, his votary? The figure of that divinity stood by the roadside at the place where he turned off and crossed the plain to reach one of his nearer caves, and many a time he had stopped to lay a handful of flowers at the feet of the black image set on its pedestal. A lamp burned there at night. He had fed it with oil and worshipped times without number, groping towards one beyond, silent, unseen but regarding. Had anyone heard? Had anyone regarded? Had he cried to a god who could not save? Was it all a vanity? All that his father and his mother had believed, was it vanity? And then, as in that other cell where he had lain and writhed in the grip of his mental torture when he heard of Seetha's death, visions of the past floated by and tormented him, bright visions of boyhood, of sports and

exploits, of his early manhood, of the little red house, his wives, his children, those children more defenceless than ever now, little lambs among wolves.

The punishment of thoughts can be severe, but back and back of all lay the old question, *why?* Why such an enmity? Why the Yellow Paper? Why the himsa that killed Seetha? Whom had he offended? The hidden foe? Yes, but who stood behind that hidden foe? Was a devil on the throne? Where was God?

He had one comfort. Chotu was free. The boy had been away from the band for some little time and Raj was thankful for that. His other men were not as Chotu to him. "Are all men men indeed? Are all stones rubies?" says the proverb. "Though brass may shine as gold, does the nature of gold belong to brass?" Raj loved Chotu with the love of a strong man for a loyal lad; he knew the good that was in the boy, he knew the ill too, but for good or ill he was his faithful Chotu, and faithfulness covers many sins. So Raj was thankful he was not here in this hateful den, thankful he had not been in that room of hateful memory.

Then he heard that a Native State Warrant had been served on Chotu.

CHAPTER VIII

A JOY RIDE

It was true, and Raj in his cell writhed with futile wretchedness as he thought of the boy in the toils of Native State Law. If only they could be together, stand their trial together, the gall of life would be sweetened for them both.

There are wheels within wheels all over the world; but nowhere do those inner wheels spin more smoothly and silently than in the underworld of India. Just a little while before Raj's capture, he and Chotu had robbed a police station, carrying off a gun and a bundle of clothes.

This robbery appeared as though it would quite beautifully turn the wheels for a very respectable gentleman of high standing, who was anxious to impress it upon a disagreeable neighbour that he, the Respectable, could not be crossed in love or war without uncomfortable consequences following. He happened to be one to whom Raj paid blackmail from his loot. He demanded that gun and that bundle. Raj gave them up, and before long the disagreeable neighbour was charged with the crime of robbing a police station and carrying off a gun and some clothes.

But the official who had to do with the charge-sheet had also

wheels to turn. He wanted to have the kudos of catching Raj, or failing him, Chotu. He therefore summoned a lad whom he knew to be a friend of the accused : " Get me either Raj or Chotu, and all will go well with that case," he said, and Dass, a young Hindu of character, considered the question. Just at that point Raj was caught. Chotu, he reflected, would certainly soon be caught. There would be himsa. What merit, what shining merit would accrue to him, Dass, if he could arrange for a capture without himsa. How the relations would thank him ; it is charming to be thanked. And he would save his friend who would praise him in the ears of all the town ; it is heaven to be praised. Incidentally, into what intricate joys might not friendship with the Force invite him in the days to come ? So he bargained carefully about the little matter of himsa, and received the solemn promise that there should be none. Thus fortified he agreed to do his best, and departed.

Very gently and very wisely he felt his way. Chotu's father had tasted of terrible himsa himself in an attempt to wrest from him information which he had not got, and dreading like woes for his boy he had connived at his eluding the Yellow Paper. But the old man was by nature law-abiding. His son's defection had been shame and grief to him. As soon as he was sure that there would be fair play he eagerly and thankfully told Dass where the boy was hiding and he blessed Dass comprehensively as he sent him off.

He need not have been so devout. Adventure of any kind was the salt of life to that cheerful youth, and this adventure promised plenty of salt.

And gave it. Spinning along on the motor-bus, Dass evolved delightful plans, and full of the secret bliss of them arrived in the little ancient temple town from whose private recesses Chotu emerged when it was made known to him who was there and what was promised. Then the two set forth on a motor ride through the country searched by the police. It was a gay ride. Chotu in a coat and tie, with a pair of black spectacles and a turban carefully arranged not according to his caste, sat beside Dass, also very swagger indeed. And they called each other " Sah," which means " Sir," and alighted for refreshments in the three chief towns through which they passed. And policemen exchanged friendly remarks with Dass who was an old friend of many of them. They enjoyed every minute of that ride.

And the end of it was interesting. Dass glowing with virtue handed his charge over to Law who, however, refused to accept Chotu in that off-hand way. " It must be in the records that we

have caught him," said Law. So Dass took Chotu to the little temple among the mountains, the temple of the jovial memories of the mighty kick, and there Chotu stood and Law, avenged at last, " caught " him. He went quite cheerfully, trusting the promise given to Dass, and it is pleasant to record that the promise was kept. Chotu bathed in the river, he walked abroad. He played cards with the police whose himsa had been so happily negotiated. When the time came, he was handed over to the British authorities, and he and his captain were together again. That he had to be handed over, had not shadowed his days with his friends, the placated police. Perhaps he knew his captain well enough to know he would not be too long in bonds. And so all the wheels were happily turned, except those of the disappointed Respectable, who, however, set others spinning forthwith. The accused was acquitted of the daring attack on the police station. Dass wore his laurels for several satisfactory years, and Law got the coveted kudos. So all went well.

Meanwhile the country lay quiet, as is her wont, saying little that anyone heard. But there was a smile on her face ; for the land knew her Tiger.

PART III

" Is it thus that virtue looks the moment after its death-struggle with evil? No, I could have told Guido better than that. A full third of the Archangel's feathers should have been torn from his wings; the rest all ruffled like Satan's own. His sword should be streaming with blood, and perhaps broken halfway to the hilt; his armour crushed, his robes rent, his breast gory; a bleeding gash on his brow, cutting right across the stern scowl of battle. He should press his foot down hard upon the old serpent, as if his very soul depended upon it, feeling him squirm mightily, and doubting whether the fight were half over yet and how the victory might turn. And with all this fierceness, this grimness, this unutterable horror, there should still be something high, tender and holy in Michael's eyes and around his mouth. But the battle was never such child's play as Guido's dapper Archangel seems to have found it."

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE,
On Guido's Picture of St. Michael and the Dragon

CHAPTER I

COOLIE TALK

IT was early morning on the mountains. A hammock carried by four coolies was swinging down the narrow forest path, when the coolies began to talk to each other. Carunia, whom they were carrying, was reading; but the talk of men who are not talking for the benefit of white ears but only for brown, can be interesting, and presently emerging from her book, Carunia listened.

Said one of the men, glancing round cautiously, to his fellow who carried the pole alongside:

" He could stand like a sambhur within a foot of us without discovering himself to us, if so he desired. Oh, a wise man is he, and a wary, and a gallant, and a brave."

" Verily, and a good," returned the other. " Did he not give to the poor all he took from the rich? Have not thousands shared his bounty? Yes, he is good."

" Oh, be joyful, for a maker of great jokes is he. Did he not deal wisely with the *polees*, and take their guns from them, and unlock his two men's handcuffs? " And they talked of how the guard had been sent back and directed to return the handcuffs to the police station. " For these I have no use," said he, the

merry joker. The four bearers chuckled, for this was of the very essence of a joke.

"Oh, a man of parts is he, and a kind and a mighty. And of all the vital spots in the human body he knows the touching places." (For India holds that each sense has its vital spot; touch it, and you kill that sense. The one which includes all, is set in the nape of the neck.) "Many a man's vital spot he might have touched, but he never did so. Yes, a merciful is he." And they began to chant one of the Red Tiger ballads.

Now Carunia had been for some time in the Grey Forest, getting a house built for the children of the Garden Village. The work of the day had filled the day from early morning till dark. There was not time even for a glance at the newspapers that came up in a bundle twice a week. So she knew nothing of what filled the men's minds till this conversation enlightened her.

It was the morning after Raj had escaped; for, as she presently knew, the famous brigand chief had been caught, "but he and Chotu, and Vina, another of his men, escaped. And he may be here, watching us at this very moment," and the coolies glanced round, half hoping they would see him. "He used to guard the children's rice carts on the roads in the time of the great drought."

"And once, when we were bringing food up to the forest house, he saw us, and Vina, the fierce Vina, called out, 'Stay, show us what is in the loads.' But he came forward. 'Nay, it is for a work of love, touch it not. It is the children's food, let it go.' And they guarded us up the path."

"Oh, they guarded many a one," sang out another coolie. "Who does not know of the Brahman lady who was going on pilgrimage to the temple in the forest?" and he pointed down to the gleaming white walls of that little Hindu shrine. "It was one of his men who took her marriage token; and he cried, 'Shame, shame on you for a craven! Take her superfluous jewels, but not her marriage token.' And he caused it to be returned and also the jewels, as a punishment for the deed, and he saw her safely to the temple."

"But how has he escaped?" asked Carunia.

"How? who knows? Only we know he walked across the plain, he and his two, each with a gun over his shoulder, and we know he said to his escort, 'Take the iron bangles back to the police station, for to that place do they belong.'" And they fell to talking of the robber captain, and of how one day after the drought he saw a great cartload of sacks of rice go by, and stopped the cart, saying to the driver who was poor, "Give me

so many sacks, and return this day week, and look among the roots of that tree yonder, and thou wilt find the money." And the driver obeyed and trusted him, for he knew that Raj never lied ; and in a week he returned, as he had been told ; and there, in a hollow among the roots of the tree, was the money tied in a cloth.

" None of his riches did he keep for himself. A share went to each in his band, and the share that fell to him he gave to the poor ; thousands love him for his bounty in the time of high prices. He said, ' Are jewels needful in a time of high prices ? ' and he said, ' Let the rich feed the poor.' Thus saying, he caused them so to do."

The underworld of India was not an unknown land to Carunia ; she had lived more years in the East than in the West, and had walked the ways of that underworld which is so seldom seen. The trap-door spider of India makes her silk-lined tunnel in the ground, and hangs a door across its mouth by a silken hinge, but the door is the colour of the ground. You walk across it, and do not see it. There, under your feet, is a whole little houseful of life ; but you are as blind to it as you are deaf to its minute voices, unless your eyes have been opened to see that frail disguising door that moves on such delicate hinges. And so it is with another door.

But now here was this new underworld, a place apart from the one to which Duty had often beckoned. And it was near ; its tunnel opened all but from the compound where the children played and did lessons, and so many things happened that the angels knew about and other less lovable people too. The Red Tiger's roads skirted that compound ; vague echoes of his doings had floated across to the Garden House, and had hardly been heeded. They belonged to this very countryside. And now, as Carunia listened, and heard tale after tale that told of a nature, made to be happy and good and triumphant, being debased by deadly sin, struggling sometimes up from the slough only to be dragged back again, and yet through all preserving a tenderness towards little children and weak and needy people, a strong desire filled her to take this brigand chief by the hand, and lead him to the Saviour of men. " Could I see him ? " she asked the coolies. They thought it quite impossible. The mountains are vast. He might be near, but he might be miles away. No man knew where he was except his most trusted friends and they would never tell. No, it was impossible.

But in God's great dictionary that word does not occur.

CHAPTER II

A MAN WITHOUT A GOD

"O GOD, if there be a God, what is this?"

It was Raj, alone in the forest, who cried the words aloud. He had escaped; thanks to some power above him, he had escaped from cell and chain, and he raised his hands instinctively in a gesture of recognition, but something gripped him still. Not steel, he could have dealt with that, but something he could not lay hands upon, something within him, about him, upon him, intangible as darkness. Utterly wretched, he went away alone, and wrestled with this new and horrible thing; and a sense of being flung out like an atom into the void took possession of him. To whom could he look for succour now?

All his life he had worshipped Something, or Someone; that Something or Someone had failed him. He had turned from what he had trusted, for he had proved it nought. And there in the black night, in the black woods, a fear was upon him; he knew himself to be a man without a God.

Then desperate thoughts sprang at him and bit into him like the red dogs of the forest that seize the sambhur by the throat and tear it to pieces with horrid violence. The man who had betrayed him—why should he live any longer? But no, to kill was a great sin. But there were some who killed and lived on and flourished like a mango tree. Was there a God who saw what was done on the earth? or was there not? He, Raj, had no God; nor dæmon, nor devil, nor godling, nor goddess had he to whom he could turn.

And, to that man in his dark hour, the terror that shook him to the soul was that something within him affirmed, "*There is a God, there is a God,*" till he groaned and cried looking up through the leaves of the trees to the distant inaccessible stars, "O God, if there be a God, what is this?"

If there be a God? As a young child he had gone with his mother to worship the oldest and the simplest of all religious symbols that stood under a tree near his home. He had watched her as she hung a wreath of oleander flowers upon it, and pleased and eager he had scattered a handful of the same sweet blossoms by it, and bowed his head as she bowed hers and put his hands together as she put hers, and given them a little shake as she shook hers, and then he had trotted back home by her side content, for all was well with his world, and had he not worshipped, albeit the Unknown?

When he grew older, his father had initiated him into certain secrets, and he had sought the afflatus and received it ; but often he would come alone and stand under the tree and feel the play of the wind among the leaves, and the flicker of the sunshine through the shade, and he would bow to the little still white thing set there in the green shadow, and look up to the wide blue sky above him and the mountains beyond the strip of bright water, and feel something he could not have expressed in words about the mystery of things, and yet—how good it was to be alive !

And again as he grew in years, he had thought more and more of that which he felt must move somewhere behind this outward show. He had never questioned the reality and the might of the invisible forces of the air and the great deeps. Beyond them, out of reach of such as he, he had come to think of a Being, God, the Unknown, the impersonal, but existing, and pervading vast space. In some vague way he had recognised that he belonged to Him ; not nearly and consciously, but as a grain of sand on the plain belongs to the Creator of the world ; and often he would raise his hands and look up into the air above him and make the Hindu gesture of committal that he had learned from his mother long ago, hoping at least that the Presence beyond took some note of it. But this faith had fallen from him now, been torn from him rather, as a garment is torn by a rough hand. At the hour of his betrayal it had fallen in rags at his feet. And his soul, set naked in the teeth of the winds of the world, shivered. He was a man without a God.

CHAPTER III

BY THE LOTUS WATER

"LOOK ! It is one of the *polees.*"

"Be ready ! "

And the three men behind the rocks covered a young man in khaki shirt and shorts who was walking across the grass near the Lotus Water.

A minute's tension, then the leader of the three whispered, "He has no gun," and instantly they all lowered their guns and waited, warily enough, but with no thought of shooting. Then two white women, hidden till now by a cactus hedge, followed the young man at some little distance, and with a great sigh of relief, as he told afterwards, Raj stepped out, and with his two followers climbed down the rocks and, walking to the women, stopped and salaamed.

"Who art thou ? " the older one asked. And he said with a

kind of pride, "I am the Red Tiger," and told of the watch over the man in khaki and of the relief when they found that he was not a policeman.

"For eight evenings we have watched, hearing you were up in the Grey Forest, hoping you would come down," and he told of how he had almost given up hope of seeing her.

"But what can I do for thee?" asked Carunia astonished. She had come to see some fields beyond the Lotus Water, and could hardly believe that this was the brigand chief.

She saw a clear-skinned man of medium height, stockily built, immensely strong apparently, and every inch an athlete. The great flashing eyes glowed like black fires under the bushy black eyebrows; but as the talk turned from point to point they lost their smouldering fires, and softened, or filled with humour. He shouted once in a big unafraid voice, and when his companions glanced round rather warningly, he laughed a jolly rollicking laugh, and waved his arm comprehensively round the horizon, "No fear here; we could see them half a mile away!" There was nothing of the criminal about him, he suggested the mountains and forests and fields. But there were hard lines drawn round the mouth that did not seem to belong to it: they seemed an afterthought; and his eyes hardened sometimes and grew fierce and bitter. When he spoke of certain kinds of himsa he fingered his gun in a deadly way. "They shall not take us alive," he said.

The boy by his side looked about nineteen, his oval brown face had set in hardness, but he had straightforward keen young eyes. The oldest man looked much the worst of the three. There was something relentless and cold and scheming in that face. A ruffian look, unacquired by the other two, dominated his whole expression.

To Carunia who waited for his answer, Raj said tersely, "For me nothing can be done, but for my little children much, they are defenceless. Their mother is dead." And he stopped, and looked at her with a look which said, "How much may I say? How much does she know?" And he would say nothing more just then but drifted back into the impenetrable reserve of his race.

"See, we have tea here, and bread, let us have tea together."

The three men sat down on the grass with their new friends, their eyes following with interest the unpacking of a tea-basket. The thermos charmed Raj. "Ah," he said appreciatively as the hot tea was poured out, "it smokes!"

But still there was that reserve, till the other white woman and the young Indian proposed going on to look at the further fields, when, left alone with the one whom apparently he had determined

to trust, he opened his thoughts to her. The other two said little: the boy merely nodded assent, or sighed long heaving sighs; the man stared across the plain, watching perhaps for a foe, while Raj in queer broken sentences, unadorned as his sin, told their story.

It was pitiful enough, and verified and amplified in every detail later on, it only grew more pitiful, and they sat long together on the rough short grass, he talking, she listening; and the sky grew rosy with sunset; and the mountains bathed in that light that is neither rose nor gold, but dreams of them both; and the little Lotus Water, silver all day long, answered to the deepening flush, kindling and colouring, unearthly in her loveliness.

Through this softness of beauty the words of that hard story fell like bullets on the petals of flowers. As Raj told in crude language his reasons for preferring death to surrender, the glory of the colours jarred. How could the sky summon her banner-bearers as if all were well? The golden glory mocked the cruel ways of men. The beauty of the world was an offence. But, no: believe that, and die outright. The clean glory of the world, as God made it, is no offence. It is a pledge, a promise. It promises that which yet shall be.

She was thinking these thoughts when a chuckle recalled her. The men were fingering their guns. "The joke of it! the joke of it," Raj was saying, "never was there a richer joke!"

"Those guns will be a snare to you all," said Carunia. "What good can stolen guns do you?" And she besought them to give them up.

"Stolen! but they were not stolen," said Raj quickly, and a trifle indignantly, "they were honestly bought." And his comrades nodded vehement agreement. "They were not stolen, not they; they were honestly bought. We paid a thousand rupees for them and for the story our escort promised to tell. Ay, and they kept their promise," he added smiling broadly. "Is that not the tale in the newspapers?" And the three men looked at one another and laughed.

Now all South India had read that Raj had persuaded his guard to take off his handcuffs (another newspaper declared he had smashed them against a rock), that he had set his companions free, and had fallen on the guards and dealt them stunning blows. After which act of mercy he had handed them the handcuffs with directions to take them to the police station to which they belonged. Then he and his men had stalked off to the hills, to the astonishment of the police and of motor-bus drivers passing that way.

It was a cheery tale, and that it did not hang together very well had struck nobody. The men smacked their lips with a wicked satisfaction, and chuckled at the remembrance of that present of three pairs of handcuffs to their guards.

"It was true we gave the bangles back. *We* had no use for them. And it is true that we took that which we required, even their guns and their ammunition, and it is true our guards were battered. But for all that we paid honestly a thousand rupees, and it was part of the bargain that they should knock themselves about enough to account for their loss of us and the guns. And this they faithfully did."

Then Raj's face darkened, and he frowned, and muttered things under his breath. He was thinking of the one who had betrayed him. "In a week, look, and he will not be found," he had said to his friend Marut, the herb doctor, about that traitor only the evening before. His heart was hot with thoughts of revenge.

"That gun will be thy temptation," said Carunia again.

"It is my life," he answered simply, his face clearing a little; and he patted his gun as a man does his dog.

"Promise me thou wilt not use it except in defence of thy life"—it would have been useless to press for more than that. Even to ask that, meant more than Raj was prepared to grant. He drew a deep breath, and for a minute spoke not a single word.

Then "*I promise*," he said gruffly, but with a straight look into her eyes. And that promise kept, under God only knows what stress of temptation to break it, saved many a life in the difficult days to come.

But the first thing, the only thing that could be urged with any certain hope of happiness in the end, was surrender, and this question was discussed up and down.

"We could never get near anyone to do it. They have leave to shoot at sight. They would not shoot to kill outright. We should fall alive into their hands, there would be himsa; ten thousand times rather than that we choose death."

"Let me take thee to the Superintendent of Police. Then all will be well. No himsa can be." Carunia said it more to Raj than to the others, for he seemed nearer willingness. He hesitated for a moment. "I should like to go to him," he said; "he spoke kindly to me after I was trapped. I began to tell him what had been done; but I could not tell him much for I was still in the hands of his men, and he took it that it was only a matter of a few rough knocks in a scuffle." Then, with a vehement gesture, "But no; we should be torn out of the cart at the toll-gate,

or before we reached it. Many are watching. The roads are all watched." And he said that not even with an Englishwoman would they be safe ; the reward was large ; there would be trouble, and he could not have her in it.

" We go nowhere without our guns," he concluded significantly. " We will endure no more himsa. It is himsa that keeps us with guns in our hands. Nor can it be said that there would be none, even if we gave ourselves up. There are things done, of which the white man knows nothing—things that leave no mark on the flesh." And he turned from the thought.

That was a bitter hour. To leave them to the fate that must come upon them if they would not surrender, seemed impossible ; and yet how do otherwise ? " If only we could serve you, if we could guard your forest house, we would be faithful. Indeed we would be faithful," Raj had said, " and never a twig of the Sirkar trees would be touched by thievish men of the Plains if they knew that we were there ! " And something about the man bore witness that he spoke the truth. But India no longer makes brigand chieftains into warders for her frontiers. No way opened for Raj, except the way of the Law, and well for him if Law were all he had to fear.

Only the Saviour of sinners, the Friend of sinners, can face, undismayed, tragedy like this. To Him then, of whom she told them all they could wait to hear, Carunia committed those three distracted men. Kneeling on the grass by the waterside she prayed for them ; and Raj knelt, with his face in his hands, for a long time in a silence that might be felt.

And then the sun went down over the tops of the mountains. But in a little while the stars came out.

CHAPTER IV

OVER THE FIVE DÆMONS

" It may be done."

" Swear on the five dæmons and he will believe thee."

" Yea, he will never doubt that oath."

" Never : did he ever break his own ? "

" So be it then."

" Ay, sure is that oath : he will never question it."

" Swear on thy son also ; that oath is sure."

" I will swear also on my eldest son."

" And I on the five dæmons."

" We can buy the dæmons' pardon with part of the reward."

"So be it then."

They were two brothers, belonging to one of the criminal tribes of India, and they were talking in low whispers with some deputed to arrange this matter. The small whitewashed house where they talked stands at the end of the Village of the Herons. People point to it now as they pass: "the house of the betrayers." Round about are many palms, and at sunset the air fills with the sound of wings and with the mingled cries of the little snow-white herons of the rice fields that roost in thousands in those palms. Palms and birds—how innocent it all appears! But the people shudder as they look; for that house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

And that night, while the crafty low talk proceeded, away in the forest the three men in their trouble were turning towards right, and planning to come in. For, as they pondered over what had been said by the Lotus Water, they felt it was the only way. "Let us rise and do it," said Raj; and he sent the message to a well-known Christian man who knew Carunia, asking him to inform her of this. But India, her better part at least, rarely hurries. While the good man, startled by the appeal to help, was considering the matter, those appointed to entangle the men left the house among the palms and, crossing the plain, reached the mountains and found them in one of the familiar caves. Then cautiously the brothers proposed a dacoity in a village by the sea.

Raj had listened to the word of peace and of salvation by the Lotus Water. But he had not touched the Lord Jesus Christ, or felt His touch on him; he did not know Him yet in any vital sense. Loot meant freedom, for there were ways by which to purchase relief from pursuit. Freedom was everything to this man of the mountains. Afterwards he told how when he was shut up in the jail the thought of running waters worked like madness in him. Everything pulled him the wrong way; there was nothing strong enough to hold him back.

But Vina, the oldest man of the three, and famed for sagacity as much as for ferocity, objected.

"They may be spies."

"Talk sense," said Raj impatiently. "Dost thou not know that they have sworn on the five dæmons in five shrines? And the elder brother," he added significantly, "has sworn on his eldest son. That oath holds when all others break."

"Has that oath never been broken?" sneered Vina, recalling by a derisive gesture the oath of the Lamp, the Book, and the Child.

Raj turned on him sharply. "It cannot be deception," he said. "Would two men break that sacred oath?"

"Ay, or twenty," said Vina, "I do not trust the brothers"; and he argued and insisted till Raj exclaimed angrily, "I stamp on thy suspicions! I helped those brothers in their trouble; would they betray me? Would he whom I count as a brother betray me?" And Vina, worsted, sulked, but had to yield. Nothing would persuade Raj that falsehood like this could be.

CHAPTER V

HIMSA

THEY were taken unawares. "There was a feast for Raj. As the food was in his hand, just as he was raising his hand to his mouth, one of the brothers from behind struck him down and another seized his gun." This was the word that flew as by wireless, till every village for miles around and all the towns and every house apart thrilled with the news; for to break the code of hospitality is never a light thing in the East. And the word that went with it burned like fire.

"There was himsa."

Swift upon it came the tale, told by old and young and high and low; no caste but told it. For once, the upright of all castes were united in indignation.

Here it is, as told by a man who saw it: "After the men had been bound with their hands behind their backs and their feet fast, and while all whom the brothers had brought to help stood round about them, one whose commands those brothers obeyed came in and looked at the prisoners, and said, pointing to Raj, 'Without shedding of blood you must break his leg. After you have broken it, call me, and I will come and see.' Saying this, he went. And it was done. A stone was brought; and, lest the skin should be broken and blood spilt, they wrapped Raj's leg in a sack rolled four times round it, and stretched it out on the stone. And one of the two brothers broke the shin bone by blows from a rice-beater" (a teak staff bound with iron). "And the other twisted the leg by the foot till the sinews gave, and Raj cried to them, 'Oh, shoot me dead!'

"Then they unrolled the sack, and called him who had commanded and he came and looked and said, 'This is right.' And then they pulled the leg backwards, and bent the knee, and tied the ankle to a rope that they had fastened round his shoulders, and carried Raj so, and flung him into a cart with the other two.

And the cart jolted greatly, for the way was rough for miles. And at last, when they came to the police station, they tilted the cart, and Raj and Chotu and Vina fell out on the ground."

"*Are there demons among men, clothed with humanity?*"

Within an hour of hearing it, Carunia, taken by a friend, a doctor who was spending the day at the house and had a Ford car, was on her way to the hospital, six miles from the house. And waiting outside the gate, while the crowd of shocked, awed, angry men round muttered about Sirkar and himsa, she, unable to bear in silence the stringing of those two words together, besought them to believe this was not the work of the Sirkar. The Great, the Greatest of all would abominate it, she said. And, seeing how it scorched her who spoke, they believed and were quiet.

After some waiting while, over the low wall of the hospital, men jumped in dozens—for half the town was either in or round about the ward where Raj lay—the officer in charge opened the gate, and the doctor and Carunia went in.

The ward had filled again; for the message had soon run through the crowd that those who had come were friends, not officials; and all who could had slipped over the wall and back to the ward. In a corner of the ward lay Vina, who had loyally followed Raj when he refused his warning. He was asleep. In a bed near by lay Chotu, half stupefied, with his head wrapped in bandages. And in the midst of that silent gazing crowd, for no man dare speak, lay Raj, like a trapped animal.

His face was grey and drawn; but his eyes were woefully alive. His leg, too swollen for splints, lay in a loose wrapping. He spoke no word of the horror of his night. "Are my little children safe?" was his only question. His eyes had cried that question, before his lips could frame it.

At such a moment what can comfort a man? What put heart into him? What restore him, give him courage to recover and win through? There is only one consolation, one incentive strong enough for such an hour as this.

There is no way to tell of how that broken man listened, unless one can tell of how the parched drink, when at last they find a spring, or how the weary rest, when they find shade after long toil through the scorching desert. In heats of despair and agony of the flesh, he drank of cool waters. He was no more a man without a God.

CHAPTER VI

MEANT UNTO GOOD

"DAY and night his books are with him," said the medical officer, an affable little gentleman, with large spectacles, hovering fingers, and a tolerant smile. "By day he reads them to while away the time, by night he keeps them under his pillow. There is nought of the Red Tiger about him. Never had I a quieter patient."

"Is he so patient then?" Carunia asked, and the assistant-surgeon discoursed in learned terms upon the nature of the injuries, and said that never in his experience had he seen anything quite of that sort, nor had to do with so patient a man. "Never even a groan." To a question about the suffering, had it been severe? he answered with a favourite formula, "By all means. Suffering of such a nature is not a slight matter." And he praised Raj's splendid constitution. "He is one whose healing would be always, as we say, by first intention," and commented on his athletic qualities, and general manliness. "But now," he added with regret, "no visits are to be permitted to him. It is an order."

This was disappointing. For the last few weeks it had been possible to go from time to time and teach Raj, and he had been keen to hear and quick to apprehend. Once another from the Garden House had taken his children to see him. "How he loved those children," said the nurse, in speaking of this visit, "there were tears in his eyes when he looked at them as they stood by his bed." These opportunites to teach him had been greatly valued, for to such a man jail would be a fierce discipline, and if only he could be prepared in spirit for it, what a difference it would make to his future, how differently he would regard those set over him. Each such interview had been short; it was shadowed by the necessary presence of the police guard, sometimes sympathetic, sometimes disagreeable, and the physical pain Raj was suffering could never be forgotten; he could not have borne much teaching. And yet those short half-hours were helping him to win through. And now they must be stopped.

Carunia said nothing. She was trying to recall exactly what Raj had learned. She could not be sure that he had passed from death unto life. She had begun at the place where he was, and taught him our Lord's words, so tender yet so stern, "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." For, while there was bitterness in his heart towards any, how could Raj find peace? He was man enough to accept what was just in his punishment as right and fair; it was what was unjust, the betrayal, and the himsa, that would rankle like a poisoned thorn. Carunia could not be sure that he had forgiven.

"I will, however, send urgently to the Magistrate," said the surgeon, breaking in upon her thoughts. "It may be he has authority to allow for suitable visits." And Carunia waited.

The ward where Raj was kept opened opposite the consulting-room where she was waiting; and from its verandah she could see the policeman in charge, and Raj propped up in bed being shaved.

"I had great difficulty to get a barber of suitable caste," continued the friendly medical, "but, having at last succeeded, he was greatly obliged to me. He is a man whose custom is to be particular about himself. Oh, a very clean man is the Red Tiger, as they call him, a very clean man"; and at this point Raj, hearing himself named, turned, and looked across to the consulting-room, and a smile beamed all over his half-shaven face, and up went his two hands in greeting. But the guard did not happen to be nice that day, and he caught the smile and disapproved. There was a difference of opinion then, Medicine holding that Raj was his patient, and should be allowed to smile if he chose, Law holding that he was his prisoner and must not. The discussion was vociferous on both sides, but the Magistrate's polite regrets that he had not authority to allow the visit, came just then, so Carunia departed sadly enough. Poor Raj, what a cheerless waste life must have looked that day, and yet the gallant heart in him was ready to make the best of it. Smile he would, and smile he did; hazarding a backward glance, Carunia saw him turn a broad and conciliatory grin on his guard.

To the district jail they took him in due course, and there the rules allowed of occasional visits, notice having been previously given and leave obtained. On a happy evening Carunia took his little daughter, Delight, to see him. The child had thought of nothing for days but this half-hour with her father, but when she saw the sentry at the gate, "He is a *polees*," she whispered, alarmed, drawing back, and all but refusing to go on.

"He will not harm thee. If anyone harmed thee, he would protect thee," said Carunia, who wanted to get the right idea into her mind once and for all. "For no other purpose does the Sirkar appoint such." But Delight shook her head, and only

the strong pull of the love she bore her father could get her through the gate.

Once within the wide open space where nothing dreadful was happening, she gained courage a little, and by the time the ward where her father lay was reached, she was almost at her ease. But it was a sober little face that nestled close to his shoulder ; and not till he began to speak and tell her that no one would hurt her would she creep out of her little shell of shy and silent fear. Then they talked together, she telling of her lessons and the brothers' lessons and play. And the hunger in the father's face, as he heard of them, was a sorrowful thing to see.

Presently Carunia asked him what he had been reading when they came into the ward.

" I was reading in the Psalms," he said, and showed her the verse. " ' I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost. O seek Thy servant.' "

" Has He sought thee, Raj ? "

" Yea, verily He sought me," said Raj. " He sought me in the evening by the Lotus Water."

When Raj had finished his story on earth, his Bible was returned to the Garden House. Among the references found at the end of the book under his name and in his writing was this : Deut. 32, 10. *He found him in a desert land.*

" Has He found thee, Raj ? "

Raj did not answer in words, but he looked up with a smile that answered for him, and pointing to another verse he read it aloud, " ' Before I was afflicted I went astray.' And that too is true. And all that has befallen me is just."

Then he pulled a book from under his pillow. It was the *Pilgrim's Progress*. He opened it at a picture of Christian at the place somewhat ascending where stood a Cross. And the burden was shown loosed from off his shoulders and beginning to tumble. Raj pointed to it. " It is like that with me," he said. " My burden has been loosed, it has fallen from me."

Before Raj was taken to the district jail Carunia had asked that, even though she might not teach him, he might have his books. The reply had been that he was " too dangerous a criminal and his offences too numerous to allow of any hope of his escaping the full rigour of the Law, and his time of relaxation (for reading, it was implied) would be small."

But the books had been allowed, and as still, four months after that night of himsa, he was not able even to stand, much less work without relaxation, this great mercy of time to read was granted. It was then that those upon whose hearts he had

been laid, marvelled at the ways of their Father. But for the himsa which had seemed to them only black abomination, would this golden boon have been? "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good."

Thus was the up-springing of the transient child of the forest with an almost magic speed, after a night of rain. Thus was the answer to a prayer that had seemed forgotten. "All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark unto thee"—was that the answer that came to the young wife's cry? She died without seeing her stars. From the land on the other side of those covered lights, she speaks courage to our hearts.

CHAPTER VII

THINGS THAT CAME TO PASS

SHORTLY after this, work called Carunia to the Grey Forest, and something happened there which would be hidden away from the eyes of all if it were not that it so belongs to this tale, with its continual intermingling of the forces of two worlds, that to leave it out would be to defraud the story of a part of its soul.

The Forest House is built on a shelf on the mountain-side. It is surrounded by a forest which opens where the ravine runs down to the Plains. One can see the lights of a temple twinkle three thousand feet below, one can hear the beating of drums when a festival is going on. But that night all was quiet, only the wind very gently moved the branches of the trees. And the leaves looked black against a moonless sky. There was no sound at all but the myriad insect tinkles that are like fairy bells ringing for some midnight fairy feast, or the call of a bird sometimes, or the bark of a deer. Save for these innocent noises, the forest was still; the noise of thoughts held the field.

They all concerned Raj.

Already it had become clear that in neither Order, visible or invisible, was this man's change of heart to pass unchallenged. How would his story end? O God, O Father, help him, carry him through.

At last, between night and morning, Carunia fell asleep and in a dream stood outside the gate of the district jail. She had stood there before, and waited while the guard at the gate heard her business and went up to the Superintendent's room to ask leave for her to come. Then she had been taken to his office, and only after some little delay had been given the required permission to go to Raj. She had then returned to the space

Photos by F. E. Beath

"ARE MY LITTLE CHILDREN SAFE"

After his capture and torture this was Raj's first question. His two small boys are as fond of climbing as he was. They are shown here, swinging on the bough of a banyan tree by the Split Rock where he kept his loot. Delight, their sister, is with them.
(Page 70.)

THE MOTHERS' SHRINE

The babies' cradles are hung from the bough, and piled on the rock, in mute appeal to the goddess of the shrine to give children to childless wives. The old priestess was one of Raj's many friends, and she is asking Delight, his little daughter, to tell her why he gave up robbing, and how it was he could hold out when the world said he robbed.
(Page 142.)

between the outer and the inner gates, and the inner gate had been unlocked, and she had been taken to the jail hospital. But in her dream there was no such delay. The outer gate opened of its own accord. The inner gate opened in the same peaceful way. She went into the jail compound, walked straight to the hospital ward, and saw Raj. With hardly a greeting, she asked this question :

" Dost thou wish to be baptized ? "

And she heard him answer, *" Yes."*

Then she asked, *" When ? "*

And he said, *" Now."*

Then there was a sense of someone passing ; he was a friend with whom she had never associated this brigand chief. She followed him, and asked him to baptize Raj, and he did so. Carunia heard the new name. And she began to waken with the sound of the name.

But not at first did she return to the room in the forest house. It seemed as though what had been seen were something finished, and she rose and knelt and rejoiced and worshipped till, inadvertently touching a little table near by, she came back to the house in the forest and knew that it was a dream.

But the effect of that dream did not pass. The burden, so intolerable before, did not come again. And, though Carunia feared to be led away by anything untrue, before the evening of that day it was borne in upon her that this was no mere dream. Something had been shown to her. So she wrote down this that had been shown, and waited in peace for its accomplishment.

A few days later the first movement, as it were, of the Unseen became evident when one, who was interested in Raj but unaware of this that was filling her heart, wrote to Carunia offering to take her to the jail in her car.

That journey by car should have taken an hour and a half. It took seven hours. Late in the afternoon the poor car limped like a lame bird past the high walls of the jail.

It had been a tiring journey. The beating back of the invisible forces had been more exhausting to press through than storms of wind and rain would have been, or even the blazing sun of that long noonday drive. A short rest was possible ; and then Carunia took a friend with her and went to the jail.

As they approached the gate, the Superintendent of the jail at that same moment advanced towards it. He had been out in the grounds. Together they walked in ; the two gates, the outer and the inner, were opened, of course, as he approached. Without the usual formality, permission to see the prisoner was given.

Carunia went to the ward, walking as though back in her dream, and, hardly waiting for greetings, she asked Raj the question :

" Dost thou wish to be baptized ? "

And heard him answer, *" Yes."*

And asked him, *" When ? "*

And heard him say, *" Now."*

Then she gave him the paper and pencil she had brought in readiness for this moment. " Write thy desire on it," she said to Raj, after leave had been given for him to do so, and she went out to the verandah lest her presence should influence him, and while she was there she told several of the Indian officials who stood in the verandah that which had been shown to her and what had happened now (for India does not question these strange facts of the spirit, and she hoped to interest the men in Raj, and so win more help for him). They listened gravely. " Never have we heard or seen anything like this," said one, " he was a mighty robber." Then they all went into the ward where Raj had written what was in his heart, and the Superintendent of the jail, who had by this time arrived, was listening while one read the words aloud.

" I am very anxious to be baptized. I believe in the Lord, the Doer. Never will I forget Him. Day and night I think of Him. I have forsaken the way in which I was. The devil, Satan, destroyed me. I trust the Lord Jesus Christ. I beseech that I may be given baptism."

He need only have written, " I wish to be baptized," and this full clear writing was a surprise. But those who had to do with him, the jailers who guarded him, the pastor who from time to time had visited him, declared that he bore the marks of a truly changed man. No one felt it possible to refuse his desire. So there was no more to be said, except to settle the time ; half-past eight next morning was the hour appointed.

Then Carunia remembered the one who had been seen passing. Had he passed at that moment it would have been most natural ; but, " He is in Calcutta," said the friend who had come with her. Where she stood that day, more elsewhere than here, the flesh seemed of no account. She could telegraph. It was possible for that friend to be spiritually present. And yet she was perplexed. No angel, only a Government official in khaki uniform, had appeared as she approached the jail ; but the gates had opened as instantly as if an angel's hand had touched their padlocks and strong iron bars. To the questions asked, the answers had come like echoes from another world. If so much, why not more ? Why not all ? . . . Lord Jesus, if it be Thou, bid him come.

But the friend who had been seen passing was more than a thousand miles away ; so Carunia went to a neighbouring mission house to get his address in Calcutta. "There is no need to telegraph," was the answer to her inquiry. "He is returning this evening. The train is in. He must be just about passing the gate."

"Passing," it was the very word, and she who used it had heard nothing of the matter. Then, indeed, it was evident that the first round of this game was played to a finish. "There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to right, angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive, the aware." And this tells all that words can tell about that hour.

Next morning the car, repaired, but still apparently reluctant, started for the jail. A moment later there was the now too familiar halt. "That's *that*," said its owner. There were some tense minutes. O come, kind angels, and push behind ! Perhaps they did, for the car was at the jail at the time appointed. And all was done as had been shown. Raj was baptized by the one who had been seen passing, by the name that had been spoken between the night and morning in the forest.

Before dawn on that baptism day, Carunia, awakened by a sense of oppression and fear which at times overrode the deep joy that was in her, saw, framed in an arch, the Southern Cross, upright and all but alone in that enclosed space. Seen thus, and seen from out of such spiritual stress, it was a sign that could not be spoken against. What if defeat and derision lay in the clouded future ? The Cross leads on through defeat and derision to victory eternal. It is the Spiritual that is strong.

CHAPTER VIII

I HAVE LEFT THE WRETCHED WAYS OF THE ABOMINABLE DEVIL

If we could see through the closely enveloping visible to the far more close enveloping invisible, what would be opened to us ?

Rulers of the darkness ? Verily, but not these only ; horses and chariots of fire, and their mighty riders, spirits sent to minister to even the least of the heirs of salvation. We should see these too, as one day we shall, when the dust of earth is blown from our eyes.

Surely on that Baptism day there was a stir through those two hosts. There was a stir even in the village of the palms and the birds, and it reached to the shrines of the five dæmons on

whom the brothers had sworn for the sake of Government silver.

They got that silver told out in good rupees, and they hastened to the shrines to appease the offended deities. Four allowed themselves to be conciliated, but the priest of the fifth would have nothing to say to them: "My dæmon is not that kind of dæmon," he said, looking at the betrayers with disgust in every wrinkle of his face. "Other dæmons may do as they please. Mine will never forgive you. Take your dirty rupees elsewhere."

And among the people on the side of the hosts angelical there was joy through the days, and they lived on the letters received from those who were allowed to teach in the jail. There was once a note from the friend who had baptized Raj. He told of Raj and Chotu "looking over the same book and helping one another to find the references. Both were in chains."

Others wrote of the evident change. Raj was still, some five months after he had received his injury, unable to walk; but he was teaching a fellow-prisoner who was beginning to be interested. Then all specially comforting visits were stopped; no one was allowed to see him but an appointed clergyman, once a week, at an inconveniently early hour; and when he could not go, Raj was not taught. Once in four months, Carunia and his little daughter might write, and he might reply. The one letter he wrote reached the Garden House on a day when the Sub-magistrate who had first to do with him was calling on business.

"I always knew he was an unusual man," he said after reading the letter, "a man of his word. Never a single lie did he tell when I examined him before committing him to the Sessions Court. 'Why this fuss and waste of time?' he said, 'Why worry about it? I did it; have I not said so?'" and he told the story of that curious trial:

"For the Red Tiger spoke out and said:

"'Your Honour, this burrowing into my deeds is exceedingly exhausting for you. See, you have been at it all day and have not got very far. I, too, am tired of it. I am tired of standing in this box'" (by which he meant the prisoner's dock, which indeed is narrow after the forest). "'See,' he said, as if *I* could change customs, 'let us conduct the matter sensibly. Ask me concerning my deeds, I will tell the truth. Having done the deed, I will say I did it. Not having done it, I will say I did not do it. There are plenty of deeds that I did, to convict me. I did them, I and no other. Let be, then, this weary chatter.'"

"I was amazed," said the good Sub-magistrate. "A most

unusual man was he; he had no pleader, he spoke for himself, as I have said."

"Then I made him understand that the Law acts entirely otherwise. Evidence is required, and witnesses. Whereat he laughed, being as well aware as I of the way such may be furnished. And he seemed to think it a pity the Law was so arranged. 'For is it not a waste of time?' said he. 'Are we not weary of it already, and what shall we be by the time we have finished?'"

"Yes, unusual was he in the manner of his mind, of that there is no doubt, and never a man will be found to say he would lie over any of his misdeeds, and that was before his change of mind. Certainly he is a man by disposition most scrupulous about the truth."

The letter ran as follows:

"To my mother with all salutations, with prayer and worship is written:

"Your letter which was desired, and my child's, I received with much joy, and I thank God. I am well, my leg is healed. My bad desires have all left me, and, being as one who is unforgetting, I praise the Lord, the Doer. Since my baptism my evil desires have changed and gone. I am loving God day and night. I have left the wretched ways of the abominable devil and in the way of the one Son Jesus the Lord I now come walking. That is to say, I am as the prodigal son. Because he did not repent, he had much tribulation: then to his Father he went, and showed love. Even so I, because of my sins, had much tribulation. Then I came close to our Lord's feet.

"The golden words you sent me, with much attention I have read, and reading I received comfort. I have heat of longing to see you. I will never forget the Lord, He is in my thoughts. I will never forget the Lord." And he sent grateful thanks to all who had prayed for him, and for the first time signed himself by his baptismal name. We keep to the old home name in this story, for to the Western ear his new name would convey nothing but length. But to the Indian ear it carries treasure. The name looks to the God of gods, to the joy of access, to the blessedness that follows such access. And to some who knew the secret of its bestowal there was more than even this in the name, even a promise of blessing to others.

From this time on, Raj talked fearlessly and earnestly with the other patients in the hospital and with any who were allowed to see him. When his trial in the Sessions Court began, he found that an old friend was being tried by the same court. It was

Pon, whom he had warned not to join him on the road, but who had been accused of robbing with Raj.

Raj could do only one thing to make up for the wrong he had done to his friend by going to his house for an occasional meal, and so involving him in trouble. That one thing he did. To Pon, smarting under a sense of injustice, for he had not robbed one anna's worth from any man, he spoke of the love of Jesus, the innocent Prisoner. "He poured the love of Jesus into my heart," said Pon afterwards. "He poured it in, saying, 'So much He loved that He died for us; even for me who did in truth rob, He died.'" And as Raj talked, the bitterness passed from Pon. "And see," said Raj, "my book says that as we brought nothing with us when we came into the world we shall take nothing out with us. The only thing that is important is that which will outlast life, and that is the love of Jesus." And he gave Pon his New Testament, "Take it and read it, and thou wilt find it here. For this book is not as other books; there is life in it," said Raj.

Before many days passed the witness that Raj bore escaped from the jail and began to work in strength. It was clear from the first that to this man, so mightily saved, his religion was to be no mere "ornament of leisure," but "the banner of a Crusade." And hopes rose high. Surely not for a day was Raj to be an inefficient Christian, "the home of a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised, unbreathed, that never sallies out and seeks her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat." Surely he was meant to be from first to last a warrior of God.

Pon's trial was soon over, he was sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment and was to be sent to another jail. Before he went he saw Raj for a moment in his cell. It was evening, and Raj was sitting on the ground with his books about him. He stood up when Pon came forward, and tucked the loose end of the chain which fastened his ankles into his waist cloth so as to leave his hands free, and he stretched out his hands to Pon, then lifted them in the salutation of the East. "God will go with thee," he said to Pon. "He will not leave thee alone in that other jail. Read thy book, and when thou hast found Jesus my Saviour, tell others about Him." And, he added urgently, "do not forget: *tell others.*"

CHAPTER IX

PLEAD GUILTY

CAN mere words describe the terrible feeling that creeps over the man who is locked up: the frantic desire to escape and mix again with fellow-man, of the bitterness of steel on the flesh—day and night the touch of steel, the jangle of steel? Add to this the strain of a public trial, the foregone conclusion staring him in the face that he will be proved guilty, not only of all the things he did, but probably of some also which he did not do. And the things that Raj had done, and owned to having done, were serious enough.

Add to what naturally has to be, the degradation of handcuffs and special chains designed for those reputed dangerous. For in his character of the Red Tiger, Raj had, it will be remembered, joined with his companions in paying a thousand rupees to establish just that reputation. He was obviously a dangerous criminal. So he was fastened with a particular kind of chain designed for such desperadoes, and it galled him, and the odiousness of being always suspected ate into him too. "Every time they fastened those special chains it was a challenge. It was as if they thought I was going to break out and were saying, 'Do it if you can,'" he said afterwards. "Was I a villain that I should be treated as a villain?" And he forgot that no one in the jail had ever heard that he had ever been anything else. Had he not all but killed his own man in a quarrel in the forest? Had not Undu the Rat told it? Had he not attacked his guards, knocked them about so that they had to go to hospital where all who came to gaze on them heard the dreadful tale? Had he not escaped from lawful custody twice already, and freed his friends and given endless trouble by dacoities, often several at one time in places miles apart? Was not the very name he had taken plain proof of his violent nature? Who but a tiger would call himself Red Tiger? Of what lay behind among the shadows, of the triple oath, of the efforts to get honest work, efforts that were bound to fail, of the loyalty that never could imagine evil even of Undu the Rat, of the well-paid guards, and of many another curious tale they knew nothing. Nor did they know of the little sad house that used to be home, nor of the ravished joys, and the dead wife.

Above all, they knew nothing of the pride Raj felt in keeping his word, and being known as Raj the Truthful. He would keep it now if they would trust him. He had yet to learn that jails

are not conducted on the parole system, at least where red tigers are concerned. Sometimes a little hope came when they said, " If thou art very quiet they will make thee warder " ; that was something to live for. Raj had never a word to say against his jailers. What they did they had to do ; he knew that. Some of them he regarded with affection.

But his trial was a long-continued puzzle. It was useless to explain, as the Sub-magistrate had good-temperedly explained, that witnesses were required, and that his hated and forsaken sins must be dragged out to the light and proved one by one against him, even though he owned up to them ; he was obviously bored by what he called the folly of it all.

And he had opinions of his own about the customs of Court. He refused to plead " Not guilty " when he was guilty. To do so seemed to him simply false. " It is the duty of the Prosecution to prove thee guilty," said Unmai, his pleader, who had generously accepted a sambhur's head in lieu of fees. It was sophistry beyond him. His old father-in-law, however, found such a code of morals unintelligible, and he offered to pay the " Not guilty " expenses. But Raj refused. There had not been time to teach him nearly all that he needed to learn ; but at least he had learned that to be a Christian meant the refusal of every false way ; and as he had eschewed lies as a Hindu, he was all the more determined towards truth as a Christian.

Hindu and Christian alike marvelled ; and Unmai told everyone who cared to listen that never once through the long months did his strange client seek by any sort of subterfuge to evade the penalty of his sin. Whatever the misery of the glaring days and the dark chained nights, he was, as those who had to do with him said, " quiet." And hearing of his extraordinary truthfulness his friends, whose anxiety could hardly wait for news, rejoiced exceedingly.

CHAPTER X

THEY WILL NEVER LET THEE OUT

But one day a word came that Raj was surly, had looked worried, would not stand, or at least wanted to sit during his trial. " He was ever a mannerly man," said those who spoke of it ; and everyone who had to do with him would admit it ; he would not naturally be rude. What was wrong ? Did the hours of standing in the dock tire the lately mended bone past endurance, or was it the spirit that was tired ? Either way it was

dangerous. Once let the inward sweetness fail, and very bitter would the waters be.

His leg, now deformed, was a continual fret. Of course, he could say nothing about it. He had received his injuries in the struggle to disarm him, so Authority held. No one else said so, no one attempted to say so. A police officer who had not earned a reputation for himsa told Carunia that it was done lest Raj should escape, and take vengeance on his betrayers and capturers. He who had ordered it kept his own counsel. But whatever was said or was not said, Raj knew better than to complain. So, if he wearied as he stood there day after day through those months, till at last he became worried and surly, nobody knew why. Nobody knew, least of all his judge, that every nerve in him was rasped like a wire on a file at every word, at every tone in every word of a man who walked in and out of that Court secure in his unimpeached virtue. "Stretch out thy leg on the table" . . . "hammer it now" . . . and again "without shedding of blood, you must break his leg. After you have broken it, call me, and I will come and see." Over and over that voice said those words. Raj could hear it speaking, but nobody else could hear. What would it be, if just for once, for one awful moment, the secret voices in such a room shouted aloud so that all could hear?

One day, after long hours in the suffocating Court, Raj returned more than usually discouraged. Every time he had raised his eyes during those interminable hours he had met only eyes, eyes, eyes, eyes like gimlets boring into him from all sides at once.

For the Court had been crowded. It always was crowded when Raj was on view. A queue of men would walk behind the sentries with their fixed bayonets. A crowd of men would hurry on ahead to be sure to be in time. Many of these men admired him not for the best in him, but for the worst; their flattery was the pernicious incense of fools. Others were sorry for him, but dared not show it. Others went merely for the sake of the spectacle. Red Tiger in chains was just that to them. His own people of the mountain-foot villages were not there. The people who loved him and knew the good in him were grieving at home. The Judge knew him only and entirely as a criminal, not as a man with a story behind him, and a sore heart within him, and all about him a clinging cluster of affections and tender human ties. It has to be like this, of course; but it should not be forgotten that it is so. And he returned to the jail very deeply depressed.

The Judge had his home and his club and a hundred interests to take his thoughts off the sordid details of life. When the time came, his mind, refreshed, could tackle them again without exasperation. The policemen who had guarded Raj had their homes, too, and their private pleasures and distractions. They, too, could come back fresh for duty. Only the prisoner had no such kindly rollers to smooth out the deep ruts worn by the weary wheels: round and round the wheels must go, always in the same ruts. Back, then, Raj returned that day to breathe the same air, feel the same touch on him, the same clutch, for he was in the "clutches of the Law." But that day, just when he was at his weakest, someone said, "Thou art in for life; there are still many charges against thee. Thou hast twelve years already. They will never let thee out."

And he could not know that it was untrue; that his Judge was giving him less than the extreme sentence, that charges still pending were going to be withdrawn by the Superintendent of Police; for it was even then apparent that not all crime was his that was labelled with his name. One little word of this would have heartened him; but that word could not be spoken.

CHAPTER XI

OVER THE WALL OF THE JAIL

And now the hot weather burned across the land. The Court was adjourned. Everyone who could go was off to the hills. The Indian clergyman who was allowed to teach Raj was too busy to do so. His friends, only some twenty-five miles away, who would have given all the cool winds of England for just that opportunity, might as well have been at the ends of the earth. It was nearly four months since a letter had reached him.

Only four months, but it felt like four years. He was not told why no one came to see him; did not know that one had been sent by the friend who had baptized him, armed with a letter asking that, instead of the ordained man who could not go, this unordained Christian man might teach him; did not know it had been refused; began to feel forgotten. Just a little human kindness would have saved him; for man cannot live by discipline alone.

So, as the jail lay gasping in the pitiless sun, and the brick walls glared on the hot men, thoughts of his forest began to work terribly in Raj. Those walls, how different from the cool green of trees, those swept paths from the forest tracks, the very

gutters, so neat, so duly flushed out, set him aching fiercely for the little wild rivers that run among the hills. At night these thoughts wrought in him. He fought them down but they returned.

Then he lived over and over again the hour of his first betrayal. That detestable wretch—but he had forgiven him. He choked down the anger that rose in him, and gradually peace returned. Yes, in forgiving there is peace. But the scalding thoughts bubbled up again. What of the second betrayal? Could it really be that he must forgive that too? To be hurled on the ground and held down and tormented, touched a man's honour. And a dark thought formed and grew in Raj. He must, somehow, get out and take vengeance on those men.

Perhaps if the teaching of those who understood him best, and knew the men, his tormentors, and all that led up to the hour when he lay on the ground in their hands, could have been allowed to help him for just a little while longer, he might have been strengthened in spirit to meet this blast of hell. The reason for the forbidding of that teaching had nothing to do with the teacher, or with Raj's behaviour in the jail, which his jailers said was excellent. The reason given was political, not personal; it was a good solid reason, from an official point of view, but from the spiritual, glass for transparency.

It happened that, on a day after the hot weather was over, the lesson read in the half-hour's Sunday service which was now possible again, was from Acts 12. The one who read it had never even imagined such storms of temptation as were shaking this man to the depths of his being. It did not occur to him to guard the tempted soul from a temptation so remote from his own experience. And as they read of chains that fell from Peter's hands and of a going out free into the city, thoughts like fires alive ran and leaped through the prisoner, who sat there in his chains. Wise and kind words were doubtless spoken. Raj hardly heard them, the throbbing within him deafened him. At best they were but an infant's pats on the head of the ravening beast that had awakened and was beating at its bars, breaking them, bearing them down. And with a new madness for liberty, a prayer broke from him that his teacher never heard, did not even dream he would be tempted to pray: "God! to be free! set us free."

Then came a great day in the jail. Authority, very important Authority, was coming to inspect it. There was no time that Sunday morning for any teaching or any help. Raj was required to clean the jail. When they looked in his cell that night he was

gone. Gone, too, was Chotu, gone were two others. And on the other side of the wall, an hour or two before, Raj and Chotu had clasped hands. "Alleluia!" Raj had exclaimed in ecstasy. "Alleluia!" So little did he at that moment realise what he had done. "And I thought of Peter the Apostle," was his word later. "I remembered that it is written that Peter wist not that which was done by the angel; and I understood that saying."

But if there be grief in Paradise, Raj's angel and Peter's must have grieved that day. What of Seetha's prayer now? What of the things that had come to pass? Had they all gone down together in confusion and defeat?

It was thus that Raj fell, failing in the hour of his temptation "to put on Christ, that great and resistless Athlete," through whom he might have "worsted the adversary in many contests and won through conflicts the wreath of incorruption."

PART IV

Think not that God whose thrifty law
Forbids a puff of air to die,
And hoards the juices of a straw,
Shall let thy pains go by.

Thy feeblest effort for the right
That could not any shock withstand
Shall flame, a two-edged sword of might
In an archangel's hand.

And that dim thought that yearned afar,
And perished on the swampy sod
Shall shine, a keen and orbèd star
Hung o'er the Porch of God.

Be not discouraged at broken and spilled resolutions; but to it, and to it again!

SAMUEL RUTHERFORD,
1637

We cannot run our lives alone, the re's only One who can;
He sees behind the camouflage that mocks our fellow-man,
Can sympathise with failure, and can understand the shame,
Can lift us from the muck-heap and make life a winning game.

MURRAY WEBB-PEPLOE.

CHAPTER I

HAVE WE COME OUT TO ROB?

CARUNIA was in the neighbouring Native State when the telegram came that told of Raj's fall. That was a day very dark, that had no brightness in it. If Raj had done this thing as an ordinary prisoner, it would have been different. But he had done it as a Christian. There was no comfort that day, no single word of comfort, till, suddenly, clear as a bugle-call through the darkness before dawn, came this:

"*Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall I shall arise, when I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me.*"

It was enough. Nothing could shake that word.

But it was a painful time. "He will certainly return to his old ways," said the enemy of souls. He said it continually, and so did others. And every time they said it, it was a whip-lash

driving to an urgency of prayer that cried and cried again for just one mighty boon, even a mighty keeping from that sin. And the Jewish allegory about God's dealings with Adam when he sinned was kindly comforting. On that first night after his sin, the story says, God gave him two stones to rub one upon another that he might have a little spark of light. The rubbing of the stones together showed his penitence : the little spark of light, the mercy of his God. In the great sadness of the early morning after the news of this grief had reached her, Carunia found balm in this old story, and asked that the two stones might be given to her poor Raj and that he might rub them together and see the little spark of light.

From this time on, for a number of people everything was coloured by thoughts of Raj and his need, and prayer rose for him constantly in many countries. For some the very stuff of life was prayer. Such prayer is apart from choice of will, it is as inevitable as breathing. Night and day make no difference to it.

. . . . . .

On the well-side of a little village by the road sat four men. The village was surprised to see them, and crowded round excitedly. "Tell us the tale!" Raj told it. "Ah! Oh! Ah!" The air danced with exclamations.

He sat for a little there, enjoying the familiar, beloved, every-day life, quite untroubled by apprehensions. Motors were already scouring the country, "in greatest haste securing all arms," as their occupants remarked later, big with importance over "special cars ordered on the instant." But what were cars to Raj? At that first hour of delirious delight, nothing at all. Nor did he ever concern himself much about these various devices for his capture. He knew nothing short of treachery could hurt him, and of treachery, even after his two experiences of betrayal, he thought little. The papers called him the idol of the people, an exaggerated word of course, but at first and for some months it was more true than false. Later, when the reports concocted to ruin his reputation began to be believed in the absence of any single fact allowed publicity on the other side, he was feared more than loved except by the men who knew the real Raj.

So, on that first day of freedom, Raj sat rejoicing, tossing his careless raptures round the adoring little company; and swift as eager runners could carry it, every tale he told, every gesture of the unchained hands, reached the villages scattered on the Plains, slipped in and out of the streets of the towns; and new

verses were tacked on to the perpetually growing song of the Red Tiger, a song no fiat of Law could strangle.

The morning wore on. The four got up, bade farewell to the friends, and moved off across the Plains, arriving after some delay in a friendly town, on a road that runs under the hills.

It is a wild road. No houses are in sight. Few people travel by that way. It opens straight upon the mountains. The men stopped to rest, and Raj and Chotu slept near by while the two others watched.

Presently a solitary traveller passed along the road; he had money, and the two who were still thieves relieved him of all he had. He cried out, and this awoke Raj and Chotu.

Raj blazed. "Shame upon you! Have I come out to rob?"

The traveller told afterwards how he made the others return all they had taken. "And I gave him a trifle in my gratitude," he said, "and he took it gladly, being assured I desired him to have it."

The traveller had hardly gone when there was the sound of a motor in the distance. Down dropped the four behind some rocks and bushes, and watched it from within a few feet of the road. "It is she!" said Raj under his breath to Chotu, and he held himself back by strong will from stopping that car; for the one in the car was Carunia, called home by the news of his escape.

A friend had offered to take her in his car. Thinking of Raj and only of him, longing to reach him and persuade him to return at once, those friends passed within perhaps six feet of him and did not know it. The car sped on. Raj gazed after it, but made no sign, for he could not know that the driver was a friend.

The car passed the traveller too. But he plodded on in silence.

CHAPTER II

I HAVE FORGIVEN HIM LONG AGO

When first Raj escaped, he took very little trouble to cover his tracks; in fact, he seemed to scatter clues like bits of paper in a paper chase. Quite openly on the day of his escape, he sent a reassuring message to the Garden House, apparently not in the least realising the grief his defection had caused. Perhaps he was too excited to realise anything just then but the joy of liberty. The pangs came later. That day the world smiled.

It smiled as Raj and his party passed a hamlet where there was one who could supply the white cotton cloth which would make it possible to discard their jail clothes. It smiled still more when,

a little later, Raj faced the stone image of the dæmon known as the Life of Wild Places whose image he had so often worshipped as he raced off the road up to his cave among the rocks.

This image, more or less life-size, and usually jet-black and very fearful, with uplifted hand grasping a dagger, may be seen on the open roadside near most of the villages on the Plains. But that particular image which the men now passed stood in a shrine, and (this was the important point) was clothed.

Raj knew that the thorny scrub of the forest would deal roughly with his men's cotton stuff ; they would soon want more, so he addressed the image :

" Thou, O Life of Wild Places, hast much less need of this good cloth than we. Be it known unto thee, O Dæmon, that we greatly require thy cloth ; therefore, O Life of Wild Places, kindly give us thine," and without more ado he stripped the image, peeling off the serviceable yards with the utmost unconcern. And as no thunderbolt struck him, the two who believed in dæmons and had stood aside till they saw what would happen to him, came forward and were clothed.

At the first house where they stopped for food the greeting was a welcome :

" In a favourable hour hast thou come, O Raj ; we are just about to measure the rice for the pot." And instead of measuring the grain into the pot they poured it into a cloth and, adding the required condiments, tied up as much as he and his men could carry.

Often in the evenings he came down from the valley which was his first place of refuge, and walked on the waste land lying at the foot of the mountains, and talked freely with any who passed, and made arrangements for the sending up of food ; with him came Chotu, and the two others. This was soon known to the police and they set a watch.

They had a perfect place there, ready made for this ambuscade. A solidly built shrine stood under a tree between two streamlets bordered with light brushwood. The shrine had only one door, and it faced the open space down which the four were likely to pass. In it there was only the stone symbol of the god. There was room for seven men, and seven rifles, and the door could be kept ajar.

Presently, towards twilight, Raj and his three came sauntering carelessly across the open space. Raj stopped opposite the shrine. " I wonder what is in there," he said.

One of his men ran forward to the door. There was a quick shout from Raj, " Hai ho ! " and then nothing and no one.

Who fled from whom was never told : but there were some who saw that eleven-fold vanishing and wondered. Verily, Raj bore a charm.

The valley to which Raj first took his men is one of those places which may be likened to a little valley of Paradise upon the earth.

The river flows on a wide bed of smooth, almost polished rock, coloured blue-grey, pink and, in parts, rose. Not a stone lies on that bed, nothing distracts the eye from the rare colour. Above on the one side, upon the wooded bank, is a hostel built for the convenience of the pilgrims who go to worship on the Rosy Rocks. On the other, the massive head of a mountain, bare and delicately painted, looks over the lower hills with an air so serene, so benign, that an expression of kindness seems to fill the valley. All round behind the hostel, range beyond range are the mountains of the west. The ravine opens to the east where it falls steeply through the forest. And to the east is the sea.

Follow this river down and you come to a drop of some sixty feet ; and here there is a room with walls of rock and greenwood. The floor of the room is rock and water.

From the wall which is rock, large smooth slabs are thrust forth so as to overhang or lie in the water. Sometimes, as if carved on purpose for a pillow, there is a higher ridge at one end of the slab. From these superb couches you look down and see little fishes swim, and water spiders and water beetles play their tireless games ; and water shadows and reflections dance upon the stones. A scorpion creeper with its fruit of ribbed velvet terra-cotta, swings from the highest bough of a tree ; those glowing lighted clusters give the point of bright colour in the room. But for that, the colour scheme is soft, subdued into one quiet harmony, yellows, and old worn greys and pinks, and the darkness of weathered rock and the golden brown of pools of water.

And, except in the monsoon when the river is in flood, the water keeps the colour rule, it flows softly. When Raj went up with his three men it was all a whisper and a singing. The little playing waterfall, the running stream on its lovely bed, filled the air with that sound of content that seems to ripple over the furthermost shores of being, smoothing, soothing, comforting : a very coolness of sweet sound.

Raj had left the jail with the intention of living straight. Rob he would not, nor allow robbery. But well within his reach was his false friend under whose roof he had been sold to the police ; and, though he had forgiven him and had no intention of hurting him, he did intend to force him to pay what he owed. If he could

give him an uncomfortable half-hour in the process, so much the better.

But as he woke up morning by morning on the stone that looks into the clear water, as the music of the water entered into him, he found that hard thoughts were slipping away from him. He seems to have been surprised at himself; perhaps he did not know that he had suffered this river-change till the two who were by profession thieves suddenly confronted him with a new proposal: "Let us terrify him, that false friend of thine, and recover the money."

"No," said Raj.

"We do not ask thee to do it, only to describe the house to us": for they did not happen to know it, and were taking no risks.

"But I do not want the thing done at all," said Raj.

"We shall not do him harm. Only we shall force him to give up the money."

"Nay, I do not wish it to be done."

"But the money is thine, not his. And he is a destroyer of his friends, a cur and a craven. Hast thou forgotten the shame of that betrayal?"

Raj had not forgotten: he burned hotly as they talked. The other two cursed the betrayer. They cursed him root and branch. Raj badly wanted to curse him too: something in him refused. But it was a mighty struggle and he wavered: then—"O brothers, stop!" he cried desperately; "I want no revenge. I will not take revenge." The others were incredulous:

"See, here is thy gun." (Raj had commandeered one and had sent a message to that effect to the owner who had responded suavely, "Let me have that back, I will give thee another.")

"The thing is too trivial for thee to touch," continued the would-be champions. "Only let us know the house." And they continued to press him, finding themselves quite at a loss to account for such a whim. The Hindu who had found them out and brought them food was standing by, and he listened with equal incredulity.

"Tell us thy reason," said the robbers impatiently, "if reason thou hast for such strange talk." And the Hindu watched Raj, wondering what he would say.

Raj said nothing for a while, at last he spoke slowly. "I have learned to say the Lord's Prayer: that is the prayer of the Christians. I am a Christian now. And I have been forgiven, therefore I must forgive."

It was crass folly to the others. And as they thought of that

man with his ill-gotten gains, and found they must let go the hope they had hugged in their hearts ever since they followed Raj to the forest, they reproached him with energy.

But the very expression of his resolve had confirmed Raj in his determination to carry it through. He looked back to an hour when, for the first time, he had understood a little of the demands his new Lord made upon him. He had willed to forgive his betrayer then. He had not realised that if one forgives, one must act as if one had forgotten, till unawares the memory of the injury drops out of mind and cannot be found even when one looks for it. He took his stand on the old act of the will : " Nay, I will be no party to any trouble done to him. I have forgiven him long ago."

CHAPTER III

TELL HER THAT I HAVE FORGIVEN THEM TOO

But a harder fight had to be fought and won. The brothers of the village where the herons roost had appeared outside the pale.

In the jail hospital when Raj lay thinking over the words of his book, and realising that his false friend must be forgiven, he did, as he believed, forgive ; and his forgiveness was honest, if not, at first, generous. But the brothers, the infamous brothers —that ten minutes' himsa had left its mark, a humped-up bone that could not be forgotten. It stared at him ; it spoke one word and only one—" Revenge." He could feel the blows of the pestle, the grasp of the hands on his foot, the twisting ; he could feel it all, even the agonising jar of that toss into the cart. Raj was not vindictive by nature, but forgive ? How could he forgive ? Could it even be right to forgive ? The hope of avenging that insult had dangled like a bait over the wall of the jail. He had fully intended mischief to those brothers when he climbed that wall and dropped on the other side. To leave them unpunished smacked of cowardice. No man had ever yet called him a coward ; no, nor ever should, he had told himself, as he passed the house in the Village of the Herons on his way to the forest. He would not fall on his foes unwarned ; but he would fight them just as soon as he could.

Now was his opportunity. The two older men were ready to help him. Chotu, a young bulldog held in leash, asked for nothing better.

But the stillness of the valley entered deeper into him, and something greater than the stillness.

For lo, He that formeth the mountains and createth the wind,

and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, He had a regard to this man of the mountains and the winds and the high places, and though his morning had been turned to darkness it was only that he might be led through darkness to the light that cannot ever be shadowed or eclipsed. And cruel desires passed from him: the dark powers withdrew. And Raj sang with the birds and the waters and the wind in the trees on the day when at last he could send this message to his friend: "*Tell her that I have forgiven them too.*"

. . . . . .

The mountains look down to-day upon this little valley of quietness with the same tranquil kindly air. The river sings the same peaceful song, the place is unchanged, only empty now. The hearth-stones, blackened from the last cooking-fires, are all that speak of the man who fought his battle there and learned to forgive his enemies.

CHAPTER IV

MADCAP

"He will starve and we with him."

It was one of the two older men who was talking. "What is this? To live without robbing and without revenges? Come, let us go or we too shall starve;" and they went to Raj and upbraided him and departed. One of them, finding his people would have nothing to say to him, gave himself up. The other disappeared.

Raj, for whose sake supplies had come up, did not greatly deplore their departure. With him, too, it was a question of how they should continue to live. He had hopes of getting work in some of the far pastures where droves of cattle are sent up to graze; he had often in times past guarded the cattle from wild beasts, and was known and trusted all over the mountains, and he might, he thought, get such work again. But he could not be sure. Still, for he was made of very human stuff, he was sorry to part with even the two thieves, and he turned to Chotu.

"Wilt thou also go away?"

Chotu had never thought of going away. "I am flesh of the finger tip to thy finger nail," was all he had to say to it, and he clave to Raj to the end.

But though he would not rob, the old madcap spirit was all alive in Raj, and the time was crammed with tales of him. One

of these had to do with the hostel that stood on the bank up stream from the room whose walls were rock and forest. The hostel had two verandahs, mere sheds roofed with palm leaves. And as both verandahs were in a tumble-down condition they made good cover for a posse of police which, about this time, was sent up.

Opposite the hostel, on the bank of the river commanding it and the grassy space in front, is a black boulder, which will for ever be known as Raj's Rock, for upon it he often stood gazing down to the Plains, watching for the coming of friends or foes, and thinking, thinking, thinking, as he watched.

One day as he stood there he saw, walking up and down on the grassy level in front of the hostel, ten policemen, each with his gun over his shoulder. They had not seen him.

By slipping down through the grass and bushes and crossing the stream quietly as he well knew how to do, Raj could have approached the hostel from the back. It is a small windowless building, and so built that one could creep up from either side and shoot before a man walking on the grass in front would know anything. Raj stood on his stone and shouted.

"Hai! Ho! Have you come up here to shoot me? Could I not shoot you if I chose?" and he shot up into the air.

The men on the grass heard the shout and, running together, saw Raj on his rock and took aim, but he was gone.

"He is out to kill," had been the word passed among the people on the Plains: it had reached Authority who quoted it, and to this story returned answer, "His powder was wet." But the people laughed; whatever Raj did not do, he kept his powder dry.

And once he came down and went to a festival, and the priest offered him food which had been devoted to the god. But he explained openly before a great concourse of people that he was a Christian now and could not eat food offered to gods. No one took offence, but the tale spread, as all the Red Tiger tales did, till it reached his hunters; after that time they attended festivals, but they never saw him. Sometimes he would visit the chief man at some great gathering, and often one who had been conversing affably with the men of the Law would, a few minutes later, be deep in talk with Raj round the corner of the temple or even out in the open; for the people had no idea of giving him up. "Why should we, when he lives without sinning?" they said. Up till now there had been no way by which Carunia could reach him, though he had sent her messages by devious ways impossible for her to track. These messages professed nothing very high, there was no word of coming in. "Fear not: only

continue to pray for me. I was very sad to hear that you are grieved. But I have not forgotten ; I will not rob. I think of you and of my little children," was the tenor of his messages. Or, as when the word about the brothers came down, "*Tell her that I have forgiven them too.*"

CHAPTER V

MY MIND REFUSED TO DESIRE

MEANWHILE the Garden House lived on the edge of a vexed sea, or, like a little island of peace in the midst of that sea, continued its daily life as if robbers at large, and police everywhere, and spies watching each movement of those in the house, were native to that life. The constantly changing personnel of the police who took part in the hunt, both in British India and the adjoining Native State, offered new and good opportunities to be bought up as constantly, and young Christian men, who had been Hindus not long before, went out on bicycles all over the countryside, and into the Native State, laden with books, Gospels, stories of power and joy, and little wordless books, with their black, red, white and gold pages : and they found that many a poor bored policeman who had to sit for hours on a stone by the wayside guarding the roads, or watching for the elusive Red Tiger, was glad to have those books. So the message was borne far. There were preaching tours undertaken too, which carried it still further. And wherever the messengers went they found the people full of new tales about the Tiger, who was so unlike his name that people smiled as they continued to use it, " for no Red Tiger is he."

One of the Garden House messengers belonged to a powerful wealthy clan, and his people in travelling frequently met Raj, and told their relative of these encounters.

One day his uncle who was journeying to the Native State was stopped by Raj and Chotu who, in the immemorial way of India, not having food, asked for it.

" I am not travelling with money," said the traveller, who knew Raj though Raj did not know him. And Raj salaamed and would have let the cart go on, had not the traveller pulled out a rupee and four annas.

" Stay, I have this trifle with me. It is all I happened to bring. Take it and welcome." And he gave the money and a muslin scarf.

Raj thanked him, and the cart proceeded, to be presently stopped by a shout :

Photos by (1 & 2) A. G. Arnot, (3) F. E. Beath

RAJ'S HOUSE

The little sad house that used to be home, now quite ruined. (Page 35.)

THE HOSTEL

Round the cooking stones in the foreground of the shed to the left the seven spies sat, whom Raj bluffed on the day Kumar passed up the hill. The shed to the right looks across the river to Raj's Rock. (Pages 95 and 209.)

THE RIVER BED NEAR THE JOYOUS CITY

Where Raj played his last games of hockey with the boys of the town. His children are looking for fish in the shallow water. (Page 54.)

"But what about the toll? You will want the four annas (about fourpence) for the toll. The rupee is enough for us. It is enough for the day"; and astonished, the traveller took the four annas, which in truth would be wanted for the toll in a few minutes. Naturally, he told the story wherever he went. It presently reached the young messenger's parents. They had been indignant when their son became a Christian; he had disgraced them, they would not forgive him; but when they heard of that returned four annas they began to wonder whether there was not something in Christianity.

Once again, a party of jewelled women belonging to the same clan who were travelling with their servants met Raj and Chotu. Not a policeman was in sight. The driver knew them, there would have been no thought of resistance. The cart stopped. But Raj smiled at the women. "Fear me not. I will not do anything. But we are hungry. May we have a little rice?" The women had some, done up in bundles for the journey. They shared it lavishly, and the driver gave him a couple of cigars.

A week or two later when this story had flown everywhere, a friend met Raj on the mountains and asked him what he felt when confronted with this temptation. Was not the pull of the old life strong?

He thought for a moment, evidently to find words for the new sensation. At last he said, "My fingers twitched to take them" (the thick masses of jewels hanging from the women's ears, the chains and bangles and anklets), "*but my mind refused to desire.*"

About this time Neethi, an elderly Christian of upright character who was staying in a village near the foot of the hills, heard that the two were there and wanted to see him; and late one evening before he could say yea or nay, they had come into the room where he was, and were kneeling before him.

"Pray with us," said Raj eagerly. But the Christian was afraid, he trembled knowing the danger of speech with these two.

"I shook," he said in telling of it. "I shook, yea I trembled, my flesh quaked." Never was flesh less intended for such a moment. "But Raj revived me. He said, 'Fear not, do not tremble so. Is not the Lord, the Doer, with us?' and suddenly I found myself in prayer with them. I raised my hands; I put my right hand on the one head and my left on the other, and I prayed that they might be kept from sin, never yielding to any kind of temptation, and they most earnestly prayed with me."

There in the little closed room, lit by a small brass lamp, the white-headed Christian, who had walked in the way he should

go all the days of his life, and the two who had wandered so far from the right way, talked for a while together.

From that night on, nothing could shake that Christian man in his faith for Raj and Chotu. He could not have explained the phenomenon of conversion in terms of modern thought. He knew as little of such terms as the two did who had craved his sympathetic prayer. But this he apprehended though he could not have so expressed it, that, in "the region of the heart in which we dwell alone with our willingness and unwillingness," these two had willed to do right. And with them all through the burning days that were to come, he, and many another, saw the Form of the Fourth who had been with the three in that little closed room.

CHAPTER VI

THREE FIERY NIGHTS

ALL this time there had been the keenest desire to reach Raj direct (Carunia had been officially asked to do this), and get him to consider surrender. No one then foresaw what was approaching of complex hindrance. The one obvious thing was simple enough, a willing surrender.

But how reach him? His messengers never knew where he would be by the time they could return to the place where he had been. And not all were willing to return. It was too dangerous. For now, the countryside swarmed with spies drawn by hope of reward. But Carunia had given books to everyone likely to fall in with Raj, and some of these books he had gratefully received and was known to be reading. This news quickened hope.

One day a stately figure crossed the compound of the Garden House, and was presently standing in Carunia's room. There was a dignity and a calm about the man that drew her regard, and she considered him attentively.

He was tall, and clad in spotless white. His white turban was twisted about a finely formed head. His frank strong face was lighted by a most benevolent smile; his bearing was that of a mountaineer. He said that he had heard of Carunia's care for Raj and Chotu, and, having seen them in the forest, in a cave by a beautiful river, he thought she might like to hear of them. He had been out of India for many years and was here on a visit. His family owned land on the mountains, and he was up there when he had chanced upon the men.

Then he told her about them, and as he warmed to his subject,

he said with a compassionate inflexion in his voice, " It did seem to me such a strange thing that they should be hunted like man-eating tigers. I found them exceedingly gentle. And yet they are so harassed by the prospect of being captured and of suffering from himsa that they have no peace except when they can forget their deplorable condition. And this they do sometimes, for many love them and are good to them. It was extraordinary to me to see how much they are loved, Raj especially ; though at great hazard food is taken up, they have at present sufficient ; and not only so, a large pot for the boiling of water has been taken up, so that if he will, Raj, who is very particular about his person, may bathe in hot water."

And he told an amusing story of how Raj sharpened his big hunting knife on the stones and used it for razor. He was clumsy at first, he said, for, according to the custom of his people, Raj had always been shaved by the barber, but he hated being " in a mess," and the process of growing a beard was, he considered, " messy," so in spite of cuts and scratches he had persisted, and managed to keep tidy. A looking-glass about two inches in diameter had been sent up, and the big knife and the little glass working together tickled Raj's sense of humour. " He has also Pears' soap," said the man in white, smiling at the recollection. What an advertisement it would make for the famous old firm ; the cave in the forest, the river rushing swiftly among huge boulders, the two outlaws with their books, the cooking-pot on its three stones, the bundle of rice brought up at such risk, the big bathing-pot, the big knife, the little glass, and Pears' soap. There was not much comedy in this long drawn-out tragedy. But the kindly elf who moves even among tragedies found a smile there.

Then Per, the man in white, passed on to graver matters. He told of the men's anxiety as they heard of the severe measures being used to force their friends to betray them ; these grew much severer later on, but even then were bad enough. They knew, too, of Carunia's trouble, and that had greatly depressed them. They sent a message now : " We have heard that our mother is sad, and therefore her sons are sad. We had hoped that we might have stayed out quietly and found work in the forest, doing no one any harm. If only we might work in our mother's garden digging pits to the end of our days, we would do that work gladly." (They meant that no work would be too dull.) " But if that cannot be, we shall do as our mother wishes, for are we not her sons ? " A few days afterwards the word fell that they had come down and were in a little town at the foot of the mountains, where they would wait their opportunity and

come to the Garden House at night when the spies were not likely to track them. And they would give themselves up.

Then it was known that the police had heard of their coming down, and that they and their spies had surrounded the little town, and backwards and forwards rumours flew like birds on wings. Raj was caught on his way to the Garden House. No, he had slipped through the net, he was safe in a little house in the town, and the people had refused to betray him. No, he was on the plain between the hills and the town, and the police were after him. No, he was in hiding nobody knew where. The police knew, they were on his track, the Sirkar had sent orders to get him at once. They had got him : thus the thousand tongues of the bazaar.

Is there any hunt so exciting as a man hunt? Excitement like a fever swept through the countryside. Something had evidently passed from high places to the police, for their energy at that moment made all men hold their breath. This time of intense feeling, vivid to memory as fire itself, began with a sudden conflagration in the valley leading up to the Grey Forest, where the Garden House children happened to be staying. From above they looked down on a valley suffused with orange light. The ridges of the lower hills were fringed with fire. It closed the valley to any man below.

" They think Raj and Chotu are often in that valley. They cannot believe that they never go to the children's house. They know that rice is kept there. It is vain to tell them that they never go. The fire is to cut off their retreat "—this was the word that ran to the Garden House.

On the second evening a valley leading up to a well-known refuge was fired in the same way. The fire did not start, as forest fires usually do, from one or two centres. It was possible to see the scores of little fires springing up almost simultaneously from different parts of the hill-side. " They do it with lighted sticks of frankincense," said one of the indignant Government servants in charge of the forest, to whom these fires, that ravaged between three and four thousand acres, meant terrible days and nights of fighting by means of counter-fires. " The sticks are tied on to match-boxes and left among the grass. But nothing can be done to prove it. There is not much left of frankincense or match-box after the elephant grass is ablaze." The third night showed another valley wrapped in flames.

On the first evening, watchers on the Plains saw only an awful but magnificent pageant. Through a telescope the trees were seen to flare up like torches. The leaping, roaring masses of

flame would seize on the low scrub on the edge of a hill, and instantly a fiery serpent would fly along that hill-top.

The grass would kindle, and sheets of flame would rise in acres of light. Sometimes the flame would spring up in the air, wreathing and coiling upon itself, as if the amazing element contained a form upon which to climb. That burning fiery furnace was a pageant indeed.

But all sense of magnificence passed on the second night when its purpose became known. On the third, when the last of the approaches to the mountains was laid bare, it seemed as if not even a hare, if there had been one left alive, could cross unseen.

To give oneself up is one thing ; to be seized another. Suppose they were overwhelmed by numbers, as they were that last time by the village near the sea, bound, and tormented by himsa, to what lengths might they not be goaded by the fearful spur of pain ? Does not the human spirit, unless perfected, as these two were not perfected, react always in just one way to the horror of stark brutality ?

" I watched all that the surgeons did with a fascinated intensity. Suffering so great cannot be expressed in words, and thus fortunately cannot be recalled ; the particular pangs are now forgotten. But the black whirlwind of emotion, the horror of great darkness, and the sense of desertion by God and men bordering close upon despair, which swept through my mind and overwhelmed my heart, I can never forget, however gladly I would do so."

Thus wrote George Wilson of Edinburgh in the days before chloroform, about pain accepted not of constraint, but with a mind quieted beforehand by holy exercises, and disciplined to patience. Pain can call despair : despair can tear up the very roots of faith. So it was not fear of death that held hearts anxious and eyes waking through that long night. It was a far worse fear. The moon that shone straight through that night was never for one kind minute hidden in clouds. There were no clouds except the orange-coloured smoke that lay over the burning grass. Often afterwards it was as if the wings of God in the form of great soft clouds brooded upon the mountains. But that night it was not so. Silver, clear enough to cause all colours to be distinguished, mixed with the red gold of the fire. The little town was honeycombed with the work of spies. There was no way to escape in that bright moonlight. Carunia had been asked to use her influence to get the men to surrender. This was their first attempt to do so. What if it ended in disaster ? What if they believed the word that would certainly

be told them, that she whom they trusted had betrayed them?

In the early morning the fires died down, only the smoke rolled up white in the dawn. And a word came floating across, brought no one could tell how, "We are safe. We were not given as a prey to their teeth."

CHAPTER VII

THE LETTER FROM THE CAVE

It was a sultry afternoon. A knock came at the door.

When people came from Raj, there was always a pause before the messengers arrived at the house. They would loiter somewhere near, careless-looking and casual; and two or three would come together, of whom only one man knew anything. This one man had to be disengaged from the others without making them wonder why. He was often a stranger to Carunia. "By his ear-rings or toe-rings or finger-rings (and they would be described) "he may be known," or "he will cough so—or move his hand so—or flick his eyelashes; that is the one who may be trusted." And all this took time. On that day, however, no introduction was required; but the five minutes that elapsed before it was possible to ask the one question that mattered felt like five hours. At last they were alone, Carunia and Per, the man in white. Then from some convenient corner of his person Per produced two bits of crumpled paper.

"From him, for you."

"From him? How?"

"I saw him. He wrote it. I brought it."

"Is he living straight?"

"No wrong thing will he do. His cloth and Chotu's are in rags, mere tatters, torn by the bushes. They could have got new ones. Is not that proof?"

This was the letter written from a wild beast's lair far from the beautiful river.

"*Emmanuel my help.*

"With the usual salutations. To my mother:

"By the kindness of God and your loving prayers we are being protected. We fully believe what you write. We know you are caring for us. As you wish, robbery, theft, dacoity, killing, are things we have nothing to do with. We are walking as you wish us to walk.

"Many foes have searched for us, but we have eluded them all. If it had not been for the Lord who withheld us, we should have been tempted to kill.

"If they had not taken us by a cunning device, we should not have been caught. If they had caught us fairly face to face, we should never have left the jail. As they caught us by guile, we felt challenged to escape. We ask you to forgive us for leaving the jail. We will not write more. *Emmanuel my help.*"

"We ask you to forgive us." It sounded like the letter of a big child betrayed into something badly wrong for which he is sorry, and the *naïveté* of it was like a child too.

Then Per told the story of the chase and almost capture to which the letter alludes. Fifty men had been stalking Raj and Chotu for hours and had surrounded them. They were under cover, but could see their hunters poking through the brushwood and behind rocks. They would shoot at sight. The outlaws crouched low, each with his finger on the trigger of his loaded gun. At least four, probably more, policemen could be disabled before they could discover from whence the shots came, and in the moment of panic Raj and Chotu could make a dash through. There seemed no other possible way by which they could escape.

But they remembered their promise, the promise given by the Lotus Water nearly a year before. It must have seemed an age of minutes to the hunted men in the middle of that circle. But though they never took their eyes off the unconscious policemen, they kept their hands steady, and they did not shoot. One by one the policemen drew off and tailed down the hill-side.

It must have been good to hear this talk, and to hear what follows must have been interesting too; but the word sounds a trifle colourless.

"To deliver ourselves up to the jail, of this we have thought again," said Raj.

Then Chotu stretched out his hand. "I cannot do it," he said. "We should fall into their clutches, and have I not heard what they mean to do to my hands?"

Then Raj thrust forth his foot; where the ankle was twisted something still grated. He touched the bony deformity on the calf of the leg.

"I too have heard," he said briefly. "I am not to walk again. 'Dead or alive,' they say the reward is sure. But they do not mean to take me dead."

In a moment it was as if the place were full of little whispers and murmurs. They could hear the words distinctly. For as a

shell gathers into itself the sounds of the air about it, and murmurs them into the ear, almost so did that cave murmur to the two men who sat there all ear, listening intently :

" Without doubt the leg would have been removed that night."

" The himsa was so done that there might be a reason for its removal."

" That was doubtless the intention."

" Who would have inquired ? It would have been said to be the result of the fight."

" But there was no fight. Had we the chance to fight ? "

" No, but so it would have been said."

" Doubtless the going of the white doctor and the white woman influenced towards the stopping of that."

" About *that* there is no question."

There was not a village for miles round but talked like that ; and the talk came up into the cave and whispered round its low arched walls, and the roof gathered it up again, and murmured it over and over to the men who were all ear. " When a man lies roped hand and foot on the ground at the feet of those whom he has offended much may be done to him without killing him outright," said Raj. " Himsa is an abomination." Per heard him in silence ; was the word too fierce ? Per did not feel it so, nor will anyone who has experienced in the flesh the awful mastery of physical pain. There is such a thing as the " animal consciousness of agony." Such a consciousness refuses to die, refuses to fade. It is scarlet to the end.

No one spoke for a while : then, " They would mock us in the jail," said Chotu, swinging off from body to mind.

" Listen to him," said Raj with a rough loving touch on the boy's shoulder. " Listen to the strong man ! " Then more seriously he said, " He is a weak man who cannot bear being mocked." They left it at that.

CHAPTER VIII

A PLAN THAT FAILED

" If it were not for the teaching of this book, that floor would be piled with golden jewels." And Raj pointed to the New Testament in his hands and to the bare earth-floor of his cave, and he laughed. This was in answer to a question asked by the fatherly Per, who had again found his way among the rocks of a hidden valley between two steep mountains. Like all Raj's favourite caves, it opened upon a river, a little golden streamlet then, but

soon to be a raging torrent. And he told Per of how, even in his saddest hours, the clear water comforted him, and the sweetness of the green leaves of the thousand trees of the forest. But there was always the thought of his duty weighing on his mind; for, from the day he had known of the grief he had caused, all the best in him drew him towards surrender, though his attempt to come in by way of the Garden House had not encouraged him.

Then for a while nothing was heard of the men. They rarely stayed long in any one locality. How they found it possible to obtain food through these many quick marches very few people knew. But everywhere there seemed to be someone ready to take risks with cheerfulness for the love he bore to this robber captain. It was not only those whom he had befriended in his robbing days who helped him now. (That such did was true, for human nature can be grateful; of these the Garden House knew nothing.) There were others. Sometimes a man who never could have received favours from an outlaw would send a message to say that he head heard of Carunia's hope that Raj would surrender. "On such and such a path in the upper forest there is a tree with its bark notched like this"; and the particular device would be shown. "Food will be left by that tree at such and such an hour. A letter, if left there, will be safe." Then perhaps a moment later. "But will not the Great forgive? We could raise any sum for security, and men of every caste would sign such a petition, yea, even up to thousands of names."

To which Carunia would say: "There are the past crimes and the escape from jail against him."

"But has not the Greatest the power to pardon?"

"He has that power, but where is the proof of a turning from sin?"

"But do not all know that there is a turning? He will not rob. Is that not proof?" And the people could not understand that the Great thought the reason Raj was not robbing was because he was afraid to come down on the roads.

So up to the notched tree a day's journey distant a messenger would go, and perhaps find the hunt had turned to that direction—not that the hunters often penetrated the forest, but their spies did—so no message could be left. But there were some who were always on the look-out for another chance. In all weathers, when the clouds that gather before the monsoon wrapped the mountains in a black pall, as keenly as through the sultry days after the fires, those to whom this perilous ministry had been committed went up and returned tired out, but undefeated. Foodless often, for it was difficult to carry much food,

or subsisting on a few rice-cakes tied in a handkerchief, counting nothing too much to do for Raj, those three or four faithful men held on in confidence. " He is too dear a man to be lost," Per said one day after a vain search. " And Jesus did not count a death on the cross too much to suffer for him. It is not much if I have thorns in my feet."

At this time the Superintendent of Police was away from the district ; and Raj, who knew of this, sent a message to the effect that nothing would induce him to surrender during his absence, but that, upon his return (" of which I shall at once know," he said), he would try again to reach the Garden House without being intercepted. This delay, however, was dangerous, and it seemed as if help had come when friends who knew him and believed in him offered to shelter him, and, upon the return of the District Superintendent, to take Raj in their car direct to him. They lived on the other side of the hills. It sounded a safe plan, and as soon as possible was made known to Raj. He agreed at once, and Chotu was willing too. Nothing was needed for the journey but a couple of rough blankets to serve as rain-cloaks. And some khaki went up as their own was in shreds. Per took a little bundle of books on his own account, and his rain-cloak blanket and a change of white. " No food is required," Raj had said. " We have food."

It was a risky journey. The name of the friends who were ready to help had been pricked in and out of the pattern of a belt. They were not named aloud, lest the very air should hear. Nothing that care could do was left undone. Per had offered to go with the men, " lest they should faint in their minds," he said, for he knew well what it would be to them to take this definite step. The very creepers of the forest would fling out their long festoons to entangle their feet and hold them back.

Did the good angels climb the mountain with him, as he found his way up through ravines full of chilly grey mist ? Did they lead him to a roomy cave when the rain came down in sheets ? He found the men at last, and with few words they started on their journey.

They had to pass a place on the mountain frontier where a guard was stationed. The pass was watched day and night at that time. How they got through Per could not say ; was it the angels again ?

But to what end ? For as they emerged from the forest upon grass-land, they saw, dotted here and there in a long uneven line, crouching figures or figures standing up. There, in full view, lay the house of their desires, not more than four miles away. But

it might as well have been four hundred. No one ever discovered how the plan had become known. Beaten back, the men returned by the way they had come; and Per arrived at the Garden House depressed and discouraged.

"It is grievous to think of them still in the forest when every day they stay there adds to the risk of their being drawn back into sin," he said, and truly. There had been the kindest feeling about them in high places, where the sportsman in the brigand had appealed to the sportsman in the unfossilised official; and everyone admitted that, brigand or not, Raj was a sportsman. This disastrous escape and still more disastrous staying out would kill that feeling. Carunia had been told again that "if she had their good at heart, she would do her best to get them in at once." And what else had she at heart? Why had the plan failed?

It was one of the nights when a dæmon was being appeased in the village near the Garden House, and a band brayed from sunset to dawn, stopping only for an hour's breathing-space about midnight. To make the night more hideous, crackers were let off at intervals: and guns, borrowed for the occasion, were fired as frequently as possible. And there were bursts of shouting and frenzies of yells as the fires burned in honour of the dæmon leaped high; and the dancing figures round them never seemed to tire. The light pricked Carunia's eyelids: the noise assaulted her ears: sleep was impossible. So she looked across to the hills behind the village. There they lay in the magical peace of moonlight, holy and calm and aloof from the wild little world below; and yet pitiful, somehow, as if they were sorry for it, not blaming. And folded up in them were the two men she had hoped would be far away to-night, with their feet set in a straight path and their faces turned towards Duty. Why had the good plan failed? Where else would they be helped to the highest? Thinking so of them—but the word is pale for what filled those hours—it was as if now one, now the other, appeared in all but bodily form, and there was no relief, till at last, across the jangle of the noise, and through all the aching disappointment and the longing over them, came a word that spoke alike of each, "*He who died for him will plan for him.*"

PART V

Strengthen me with heavenly fortitude, lest the old man, the miserable flesh not yet fully subject to the spirit, prevail and get the upper hand.

THOMAS À KEMPIS,
1380–1471.

Sir, lay the foundation thus, and ye shall not soon shrink, nor be shaken. Make tight work at the bottom, and your ship shall ride against all storms, if withal your anchor be fastened on good ground; I mean within the vail. And verily I think this is all, to gain Christ. All other things are shadows, dreams, fancies, and nothing.

SAMUEL RUTHERFORD,
1637.

CHAPTER I

BY THE CACTUS HEDGE

"WHAT brought thee this evening? But it is well. They are expected." And the speaker, Per, who had held on in faith through the days that had passed since the last disappointment, looked down with his kind paternal smile on the younger man, Dass, who, keen as ever, was all alert and ready to dash off and up the hill that very moment. He had come to the village about business of his own, and had no expectation of anything so interesting as this.

"They will tarry by that cactus hedge. Go there and wait." Dass waited, and presently through the dusk two shadows moved towards the cactus. There was a whispered greeting. Chotu had not forgotten Dass, who had saved him from himsa and taken him for that joyful motor ride.

Then Raj told Dass that he felt a drawing towards surrender, in spite of the two failures, and he seemed all but ready to come there and then. Dass's heart beat fast with hope—he was new to disappointment—Why not now? But Chotu drew Raj aside. "It cannot be," Raj said when they returned. A magician whom Chotu trusted had warned them not to change their present refuge for any other place till a certain date which fell a week or so beyond that night.

In vain Dass declared that the magician's counsel was a snare. "Has he ever misled us?" said Chotu. Dass could do nothing

to remove the feeling that to cross the powerful word of the magician would be fatal; and, bitterly disappointed, Dass listened while Chotu said that he dared not move till the appointed date. They would certainly fall into the hands of the police if they did. Then Raj drew Chotu away again, and they talked together, Raj evidently pressing for a bold disregard of the magician, Chotu demurring. When they came back, Raj said he could not persuade Chotu and he could not forsake him, so they would not move for a week, but on a night, Friday, Saturday, or Sunday, at about 1 o'clock, they would be at the Garden House. As they talked, realizing what it would mean, Raj suddenly broke out into pleading:

"Ask our mother, oh, beseech her to let us have a little teaching first. She does not know what she is asking of us. If we could be taught a little more, we should be fortified to endure. Oh, do beseech her to give us just a little teaching first."

Then as Dass, not knowing what to say, said nothing, Raj began to plead again, "Could we not see her? Is it forbidden? We hunger and we thirst for that. May it not be allowed? There is the house in the forest. We could meet her there."

What could Dass say? He did not fully understand why Carunia felt herself bound not to use the house in the forest for their help. But he did know the all but impossibility of her moving anywhere unseen. "Spies watch her," he explained to Raj, "before she could get there she would be tracked and the news would be out, and you would be trapped, and she could not protect you. They would drag you out of her sight and you know what they would do then. There is wrath out against her, because she has refused to be a trap."

Raj sighed deeply. Dass did not know what to say to comfort him; but he knew that if they were willing to come in, to use the house in the forest would not offend that curious white code of honour which all who had to do with the Garden House felt so inconvenient, for the Superintendent of Police had offered to come there to receive their surrender himself, so that (from the official point of view at least) there could be no reason for their horror of himsa. So Dass said that if they would go there in order to give themselves up, Carunia would go up at once. She would be followed. There could be no doubt about that. But they would be safe in one of the caves of the ravine and she would go to them at night (the spies would be afraid to go deep into the forest at night), and she would teach them as much as ever she could and show them where to find the strongest words of strength, and how to draw strength from their God. Much could

be put into those few hours before the District Superintendent could arrive.

" Ah, but not enough," said Raj, and there was almost despair in his voice. " What if we do come in, and then after a while lose heart as we did before, and something suddenly happens, and we give way and fall again? It will be worse than ever now, for they will separate us. For years and years they will keep us apart the one from the other—and are we not knit the one with the other? As body and soul are we knit." And Raj stretched out his hand, and Chotu caught it and held it. " What if the madness come upon us, apart though we be, and we break out in that madness? Let us be fortified first. It would be terrible to fall again."

Dass understood: he, too, quailed before that fear, and the broken note in the strong man's voice touched him.

" I did not know what to say. I could only say, ' Let us pray to God ' ; and we all knelt under the cactus hedge and we prayed and cried, ' O strong God, O mighty God, hear us ; help ! ' "

When they rose from their knees, Raj said, " I will try, yea, I will come in. It is right. God will help us." And he fixed an hour. " Help us, Lord. O Lord, help us ! " he suddenly cried out again as if from the throes of a terrific wrestling. And a passion of distress swept over him. " Even I could hardly bear it," said Dass when he described it.

Then the two men stole away through the darkness, up the hills to the forest.

And as Dass was returning home, he passed the house where the police, told off for the hunt, were quartered. They were talking loudly about Raj and Chotu. Their voices carried through the open windows, and many besides Dass heard all they had to say. Among them were decent men ; their loyalty must have been severely tried, for on the one side was their duty, and on the other was the unforbiddable human nature that protested against cruelty. And they knew, none better, what was to follow capture. Not all of any order of men are evil, or the world would go to pieces.

But what Dass heard as he passed the house made him wonder what those men would say, if he went in and said to them, " You wonder why they are not caught? I will answer your question. There are a hundred lesser reasons, but the one that includes all is this : He who knows your intentions covers them Himself."

On the first of the evenings appointed for Raj and Chotu to come to the Garden House, a sunset of peculiar beauty gathered the world into itself and held it speechless for a while. And the

children of the Garden Village, Raj's little three among them, who poured out of their nurseries to look, were drawn into that silence as they gazed up and round about at the overflowing splendour. "I *see* the crimson blaring of thy shawms." It was that then; and the red of the garden walks and walls appeared to be embraced by the jewelled light. The very dust glowed.

And as the children stood there, facing the violet mountains, their elders looked upon those mountains, and wondered if somewhere in that mist of coloured air, the men were feeling it the harder, just because it was so beautiful, to turn their backs upon it all.

That night the gate was kept open, the lamp was kept burning. The rustle of a leaf woke the sleeper who hardly slept. "I sleep, but my heart waketh"—it was the word for many a night thereafter.

On the second night, the thunderstorm that often follows such a sunset came with a swift smiting. But not the scourging of all the rods of rain—and the rain that night was like straight grey rods scourging the world—would have held Raj from keeping his word. On the third night, clouds lay in masses on the hills, filling the valleys, smothering the heights. But clouds would not have held the men. What had happened? Per, who would have pledged his soul on the lightest word of Raj, went off to try to find out. They might have been captured. But no, that could not be. The news would have flown on the wind. Was the magician in league with the police?

Torn with anxiety, the Garden House waited.

CHAPTER V

DOGS AND DRUGS

After they left Dass, the men had gone far up the shoulder of a mountain that rises double-headed from the Plains. A river flows there, and their cave was above the river. From that cave they could see for miles down the hills and across the Plains. It was not forest, but wild grey crag-land, a glorious place of far horizons.

On the day before the prescribed week closed, down in the villages the baying of dogs was heard; the people knew the sound of that baying. The dogs belonged to a clan noted for their fierce hounds. They were going up to hunt Raj and Chotu.

But hardly had the hunt pressed up the higher slopes when

down came the rain, the rivers rose, as rivers do on the mountains, in one swift tumultuous rush. The dogs came down. Their owners wanted to hurry off to their fields, now soft for ploughing, for nothing will keep a man from his fields when the first rain falls, and the clods are soft. Dogs and men departed, and the villages sighed great sighs of thanksgiving.

"Didst mark it?" said one to another. "There is a mercy behind all this. No sooner do the dogs go up than the rain comes down. Who can hunt in rain?"

And like the firing of the forest before, this hunting them with dogs drove Raj and Chotu far into the recesses of the forest.

But there are other ways of finding lost things in India. There are the ways of magic. See, then, a messenger threading the back streets of the town where the wisest of wizards lives. Follow him into the little dark house with its curious heavy smell. Hear the low bargaining. The magician's fees are high, and for long the talk proceeds, but always in muffled tones. At last the price is settled; it is never under some ten or twenty pounds. Once agreed upon, part is paid in advance.

At midnight, to the place where the dead are buried the magician goes with all rites and ceremonies, and he marks his forehead carefully with the medicine whose magical properties will preserve him from sudden attack from the offended dæmon of the pyres. In his hand he carries a human skull in which is the magic ink. Its composition is secret; but Macbeth's witches have little to teach the wizards of India; and every Christian mother who lives where the old ways still obtain buries with the utmost care the first-born baby she has lost, lest its innocent bones and brain and blood be used in the making of that ink. The Hindu who burns his child feels safer.

So to that place, with his skullful of mysteries the magician went, and inhaling the fumes of the heated liquid he saw visions. Back then he returned to the waiting messenger, and soon, among the villages on the other side of the hills, men walked stealthily bearing a strange drug. It would not kill, so some said; others held that it might. But one thing was sure. It would destroy the balance of the mind, and it would first cause sleep. In sleep a man can be trapped.

There was no open talk of this drug, but the men appointed to take it up to Raj and Chotu and mix it in their food did not keep silence. The first to be approached was a wizened little old tiger hunter. He gave reasons why he could not possibly oblige. He was old, could not find the men, dared not try to find them; they might shoot him. And he wriggled off, from head to tail

of him all one wriggle. And the word ran up the hill on very small invisible feet: "Beware; for the tiger hunter tells thee that the drug of enchantment is about to be sent up."

"I have heard of it already," said Raj.

The next who was approached made no objection; he would be able to find the men; he had no fear of them. He found them, and handed the packet to them:

"Here it is! the medicine."

"That of the enchantment?"

"Yea, verily, that which was to be given to thee."

The messenger paid for his temerity and loyalty to Raj, and so did his people; they accepted what came, and made no fuss.

It was a wet dark night a week later. Far up in a clearing in the forest is an old fruit garden. There is a house on the estate, and three men who worked there had taken shelter in it; Raj and Chotu, washed out of their cave, had gone there too. Happy, with the careless happiness of simple folk, they were cooking their meal on a fire made on the floor, when the door was pushed open, and a man and a boy came in. The man was Undu, the mountain Rat, of the inadvertent shot-wound, who had turned King's evidence; the boy was a lad who knew nothing, but had gone up for company.

Raj could not have turned out his bitterest enemy on such a cold wet night. He called Undu and the boy to come to the fire. And the other men gathered round, and someone ladled out the rice. There was goat's milk in a vessel near; Raj who was narrowly watching Undu, saw him sidle towards it.

"Thou hast medicine with thee."

"I? Why should I have medicine?" But the Rat's face told the tale. They fell on him, and searched him. And they found the powder. The wretched man dropped on his knees, fell on his face, grovelled about their feet.

"It was not I: Oh, believe me! I would never have given it. It was they who forced me, threatening himsa if I refused. Am I not in their power?"

"Thou art a traitor. Thou wouldst have killed us."

"Nay, it is not killing medicine."

"Then it is worse, it is a sleeping drug. It is magic. Thou wouldst have bewitched us."

The grovelling man expected nothing but death. The men had their guns; they were furious. The four onlookers held their breath. What would Raj do?

"Thou art a traitor," he said, "thou art false as——" Suddenly he stopped. He looked down in silence on the terrified

Undu; what passed through his mind at that moment he did not tell to anyone. He looked at Undu as if he would search the secrets of his soul: then—

"I forgive thee. Swear on the rice that thou wilt do us no evil." And a pile of rice was heaped on a leaf and the three, Raj, Chotu, and the abject Rat, stretched their hands out over it, and each said, the two looking at Undu, and he at each of them, "I swear on the rice that I will do thee no harm."

After this they all had supper, Raj and Chotu sharing theirs with Undu and the boy. And they sat together in the red fire-glow, with the chilly dark of the desolate room round them, and the wild sounds of the forest filled their ears, rushing waters, branches creaking and moaning in the wind; and Raj, who was ever by nature God's merry man, forgot that death was stalking him, and he said, "Come, let us play!" And they played like children, flinging their arms round each other's shoulders and prancing round the fire and drowning with singing and laughter and shouting the sound of the streaming rain and the wildness of the storm.

Then, as the night wore on, they threw more wood on the fire; and Raj sat down beside it; and, pulling his books from a little goat-skin bag he had made for them, he read from the Psalms and the Gospel, and then knelt down, in the unashamed way of the East, and prayed. The men who returned to the Plains quoted his words, as he put his books back in the bag and laid it under his head: "He said that he had promised her whom he called mother that he would never rob, and that by the teachings of this book he was helped to continue strong in that resolve; and he told us of the teaching; and loving happy words he spoke." And they knew then why he had not killed Undu. So they all slept in peace, and in the morning separated. The men and the boy who had shared in this little drama went to their homes on the Plains where for many troubled months they were to suffer for the sake of that evening. Raj and Chotu went to hunt for game; Undu said he would return to his masters.

But before he returned, later on in the day, they chanced to meet again in the forest, and Undu had his opportunity. He had contrived to secrete some of the powder from the search of the previous night, and this he succeeded in putting into the goat's milk the two were about to drink. Raj drank a little, knew that something was wrong with the milk, stretched himself, shook himself, felt dizzy and sick; then suddenly he understood. He turned on the trembling Rat.

"There is medicine in the milk."

"Not that, but just a little of another I had with me. It is to guard thee from the cold of this season, and the wet."

"Drink it thyself!"

"Nay, I have already had some; it is excellent medicine, but I have had enough."

But Raj's slowly kindled wrath was up, and Chotu advanced with the cup.

"Drink it," he said threateningly, and he held the cup to his mouth. Undu struggled; but Chotu forced the drink down his throat. He fell into a stupor then, and the men left him asleep in the forest. What happened after that only God knows. The Rat was never seen again.

That day, or the day after, as near as could be known, some coolies were taking food up to the Forest House, which is in a ravine within tiger walk of the house on the estate where Undu found Raj and Chotu. But they met a tiger on the path and, hurling their loads into the jungle, fled precipitately.

A tropical forest is not the safest bedroom for a drugged man; but the forest tells no tales, nor do its rightful lords.

CHAPTER XI

ALLIES

Down on the Plains, one morning the Garden House was stirred and cheered by a letter in the newspaper, asking that Authority should consider the question of a conditional pardon for Raj, even suggesting that he should be sent to the Garden House or, failing that, given some other chance to prove his true character. The writer argued that justice does not necessarily mean punishment. It would be far more just to enable a man to fulfil the first aim of the law than to punish him for not fulfilling it, always provided, of course, that the individual shows himself to be worthy of this form of justice. The letter was signed Justitia. And the Garden House, cheered to the heart by such unexpected comradeship, wondered who Justitia could be.

The letter was followed by others. Government officials wrote; one who signed himself "Sportsman" wrote; all wrote in the same strain, and it seemed impossible that such pleas should pass unheeded. Since his escape from the district jail up to that date not a crime had been recorded against Raj. To avoid trouble a few poor folk had made trivial complaints, for if a man made a complaint, such as that one of his five hundred

goats had been taken, he was less likely to be suspected of giving goat's milk to the outlaws, and some would even give false information to escape from trouble of another kind. "When a house is searched, what the women of that house have to put up with in the way of foul language and insult cannot be described. This is the best way to evade it," said one in excusing himself for such conduct. With these trifling exceptions, which everyone who knew the facts understood to be only protective complaints, there was nothing against the men. They had proved that they had forsaken sin. They were often on the roads; but they never robbed.

One of the letters to the newspaper told a tale of a conversation between two men who were waiting for a train: "He was very kind to our family. I was taking my family back to my village after my cousin's wedding, when a robber with some fierce men stopped my cart. It was midnight and we were on the road where the Red Tiger used to hide, so we were very much afraid, because we had heard much about his band of thieves.

"All at once a big man ran at the bulls and stopped them, while a bold man looked into the cart and shouted at the women to give up their jewels; they were sick with fright and began to take off their bracelets and marriage necklets. There was noise, and the leader shouted: 'I am the Red Tiger!'

"Then there was a shout from further down the road, and another man with two others came along. 'So you are the Red Tiger,' said the new-comer. 'Then who am I?' and he chased the other men away and they were very much frightened because he stood over them, and took the jewels from them, and handed them back to the women. He said he had never attacked women, and would never allow any of his followers to do so either. He asked for some rice as he was hungry; he said that he was a Christian. I had not ever seen him before. 'Are you friends with the Christians?' said the old man, who had been listening to this narration. 'I am now, and I gave him some rice,' was the other man's reply.

"He was lame and I asked him what was the matter with his leg; he was going to tell me, but listened carefully for a minute and hearing a sharp tread of boots on the road, he stopped. He looked desperate in the light from our lantern, and for a moment I was afraid, but he laughed quietly and before I could speak any more, he was away in the dark.

"'Have you heard of him since, and where is he?' said the old man.

"I don't know where he is, but I have heard much from the people round there. He is not stealing any more, and the people have much love and pity for him. He has many enemies and spies who pretend to be friends with him, and has had opportunities to take revenge on those who hurt him, but it is said that he has made a sacred vow to the God of the Christians, and will do no murder, nor ever steal again.'

"The old man gave that peculiar 'suck' with his tongue, which can express so much, and slowly moved away as the train came into the station."

The letter closed with an earnest appeal from this unknown ally that something might be done for Raj.

CHAPTER XII

JUST A FEW HUMAN BONES

ONE day, close upon this, Dass, a youth of many and varied interests, received a letter from a man, Poi by name, who owed him money, asking him to come and receive it.

Pleased with life in general, Dass arranged for himself a turban of beautiful proportions, and resplendent in a new magenta silk shoulder scarf, set forth.

"May I be forgiven for a moment?" said a voice from an inner room, and Dass sat down to wait in the verandah. As he waited, idly sucking a straw, he meditated on the pleasure of receiving that long-owed money. He had no illusions about the character of his debtor, and he rather wondered at the effusive honesty of the little travesty of a man who presently came out of a side-room, followed by one whose manner of walking and holding himself, and especially his way of narrowing his eyes when he spoke, proclaimed his profession and something of his habits. He was in the ordinary *negligé* of the country.

To a careless question of Dass's, Poi answered that they had been discussing a little matter of bones. Dass asked casually, "What bones?"

Oh, just a few human bones. They were wanted for a case. And visibly pluming themselves they opened their artless plan. Dass would be much amused. So the police officer told how he had been ordered to get evidence for the murder of Undu the Rat by the Red Tiger. The crime had been committed, or was to be said to have been committed, in a part of the forest which was over the boundary-line, and they of the Native State had

the case in hand. But the only witnesses—some men who had been up in the forest at the time—lived here on the British side, and they were very stiff and would not say what was required. Had he tried himsa, inquired Dass. Oh yes, he had; but so far quite in vain. And he had been perplexed, and this good friend here, the excellent Poi, had promised to help him.

For he had felt that if only he could get some bones, that would go far towards proving the murder. Just two or three would do, and Poi had assured him there would be no difficulty about it. Dass greatly intrigued, but still lazily aloof, suggested that there might be slight difficulties. The Rat had disappeared before, it was a habit of his. But he had always turned up again. What if, fearing to face the police after failing to drug Raj, he had gone off with the earnest of the money, which was said to have been enough to start him in the Strait Settlements? Letters would be coming, or he might awkwardly turn up. Then the unreasonable people would talk about "*polees* concoctions" (a well-known phrase) and would laugh at them; and might there not be trouble?

The friends smiled at the thought of trouble. That was too remote a possibility to worry over; but there was something in what Dass had said, and they retired to consult further. Dass, meanwhile, with some concern saw his bundle of money rolling off into space.

Presently the two returned. They told Dass they were much obliged for the help he had given, and they had decided on a safe course. The bones would be taken up and laid somewhere near the path where Undu had been seen for the last time. Then the police would go up and search, and lo, one of them not in the secret would come upon those bones. Here, on the place of the reputed murder, they had been found. The rest would follow naturally. There need be no awkward statement. A mere suggestion would serve its purpose. And with a brief word of acknowledgment for service promised) Dass did not inquire the terms of the contract), the Sub-Inspector departed.

Then very gradually and very warily the man of bones opened his soul to Dass. Indian talk of this kind is like the glass case of sea-snakes which may be seen in a celebrated Indian aquarium known as the "Fish College." For the sea-snake ties himself up into knots; you cannot see which is head and which is tail; and a dozen wriggling all at once are most bewildering. But there is nothing surer than that each head has a tail, and presently Dass saw the tail of this elongated talk. Poi had been entrusted

with money, got by the sale of Chotu's land and intended by Chotu for his defence in Court. But if those he trusts fail him the criminal is helpless, and here was the money, and Dass could have it, for there was little likelihood of Chotu's ever being able to claim it, especially if this murder matter went well. "Yes, it can assuredly be counted on to close Chotu's mouth," said the man of bones with a chuckle.

Dass wanted his money, but not at that price. And he flung off with a word on his lips that stung Poi into wondering if he had been altogether wise. But he had no fear of unpleasant consequences. He was entrenched in the goodwill of the important. He was safe.

Dass had no desire whatever to be embroiled in trouble, but he was courageous and he had some sense of honour and fair play, so when Carunia asked him if he would be willing to tell this tale to Authority and, if desired, face the officer concerned and stand to the truth of it, he was willing. He was taken to those who were investigating the matter, and the story was told to them, but Dass was not questioned. And the incident passed and settled into its appointed place among the shadows of the background of the story. But somewhere it appears to have been noted, for soon all that was required was furnished, and more completely than had been intended. There was a corpse, bones and all. There was even an eye-witness. And the corpse was of Poi's unwilling providing.

CHAPTER V

ONE MORE FORTNIGHT

"LET us go north," said Raj to Chotu as they looked with disgust at the slumbering Rat. So travelling by night they found their way to a place in the northern curve of the range, a valley soon to be swallowed up in the clouds and rain of the north-east monsoon, already heralded by the rain-storm which had filled their river and saved them from the dogs. There was a break in the weather now, and the valley lay like an open flower. They would have chosen to remain in the south, where the valleys were sheltered, till the monsoon was over. Wet weather increased the difficulty of carrying food up to them; but the north was safer as things were then. They had many friends there.

Only one man on the southern plain knew of their intentions. "Hearken, brother," Raj had said to a simple ploughman who

was a friend of his, " canst be deaf and dumb ? " The ploughman thought that he could.

" Then go," said Raj, " go to the Village of the North, and find in some secret way him whom men call Gir the faithful. Tell him we go to the Valley of the Seven Caves. Tell him he knows the cave where we shall be, and ask him to get food up to us. Then return to thy fields, and bury the name of that man deep under thy ploughing. Tell it to no one."

And the plougher went a day's journey distant to the Village of the North, and found the faithful Gir and gave him the message, and then he returned to his fields and buried the name so deep that no one knew he had ever had it. When people wondered where Raj was, he stared stolidly, and did not understand. He was as uninterested in such talk as were his bulls, his plough, or his furrows.

And from the Valley of the Seven Caves a word came down like a leaf afloat on the wind :

" By the good power of our God we are safe ; and we are being kept from every evil thing."

But safe though they might be for the moment, they were far from any kind of permanent security and, above all, they were very far from spiritual safety. For they moved about fairly freely on the hills and, though they always kept the secret of their ultimate refuge to themselves, some found ways of communicating with them.

Among these was a relative of the first people Raj had ever robbed. He was a rich influential man, and in Raj's precarious circumstances his friendship was of great account. He had a feud with a fellow-casteman, and he wanted Raj and Chotu to repay his grudge by robbing that man. If they refused, it would mean that this rich man, whose word would carry far, would be turned to be their enemy ; the word of one such enemy could poison a thousand minds ; Raj had that to face when he sent a decisive message : " As for such a matter, we will not touch it," and turned that would-be powerful friend into a powerful foe.

The full consequences of this action were not seen until long afterwards when a brave and innocent man was lingering in jail, awaiting trial for complicity with Raj in a serious crime which it was said Raj had committed. That poor man's wife had implored Carunia to go to the only man who could save him, and ask him to refuse to say what he must know was untrue. But to do that would have done more harm than good, for the tale that such a visit had been paid would have been bruited all over the country, and its purpose twisted to make it appear to be an

unwarrantable attempt to defeat the ends of Justice. "It is a *polees* case, so it is undesirable to oppose them," said an elderly man thoughtfully, as a group of anxious men discussed the case. "But there is one who has great influence over the chief *polees* witness; if he told the witness to tell the truth that witness would tell it."

The other men agreed that this was true. They were all of one caste; the two of whom they spoke were of a different caste.

"Then why not go and ask that influential man to use his influence on the side of truth?"

The men looked at the questioner, their grave eyes searching hers with a puzzled yet probing gaze. They had something in their minds which they hesitated to say.

"I know what they do not like to say," said a lad of another caste who had joined the group, "and their thoughts are true." And he told the story of Raj's refusal to rob even to secure the good word of the rich and influential man. "That rich man is my kinsman. These," and he glanced towards the men whose fine feeling had forbidden them to speak, "know all about it, and they know, as I know, that it is useless to ask my kinsman to help. He will do nothing to help any man of Raj's caste, or any friend of Raj's."

Sometimes a hint of Raj's steadfastness dropped upon friends below. And the lamp was never put out, for any night might find Raj and Chotu at the door. And to the men in the distant forest the thought of surrender, pushed away by what had happened, returned, and approached nearer and nearer till again they began to talk of a date. From charcoal burner to woodman and from woodman to farmer at his plough a short message passed; hardly one who repeated it understood it. "One more fortnight, only one fortnight more." Alas, for that one fortnight!

CHAPTER VI

POISON-GAS

We have come to a place in our story where a careful reserve is required. The background here must refuse illuminating detail. It must be like the background the mountains make on a dark and cloudy day.

Up to this point there was no charge of any moment against Raj, so it was clearly and repeatedly stated by those police officers who frequently came to the Garden House. "Here and

there we hear of petty thefts, and some say they are by him, but we do not credit them," said an Inspector of Police one day. "The fact is, and we cannot deny it, he is a changed man."

All through its years the Garden House had kept strictly to its own business. It had no wish, very much the reverse, to mix itself up in the business of others. But Raj's spiritual welfare appeared to be bound up with his surrender. There was nothing that House wanted more. So when police officers came to ask for help, how could it be refused? But now another hand began to influence the conduct of affairs. The House was soon out of its depth and withdrew. Intrigue is a word that covers great deeps.

> We sit in a cloud and sing, like pictured angels,
> And say the world runs smooth—while right below
> Welters the black, fermenting heap of life
> On which our state is built.

We quote out of context, but the words pierce through to the truth that we mean.

There was a day when a definite offer of help, unasked, was given, so that Carunia might without difficulty communicate with Raj, and persuade him to come in. The Garden House was surrounded by spies, and as all along the hills there were police on special duty, there was no way by which Raj could come to that house (as it had been urged that he should do) without being captured on the way. But if these various bodies of men were withdrawn, it would be less difficult to arrange for his surrender. If Carunia would let Raj know that this would be done, her messengers would not be followed; Raj would not be trapped; no one would touch him. And after his arrest an added grace would be granted: no handcuffs would be used. Why use them when a man surrendered himself? There would be no indignities: Raj was a man of honour; he would be asked to give his parole, and if he gave it he could certainly be trusted to keep it.

There were other and lavish promises and, though Carunia did not know if they could be kept, she was won by the kindness which seemed to lie behind them, and was on the point of getting into direct touch with Raj when a message came from those of whose integrity she had had years of proof, Hindus of the nobler sort, her friends; and this message discovered the fermenting heap of whose existence she had known nothing. It warned her to have nothing to do with any such attempt to get Raj in. "There is

a boast going about that you have been thoroughly deceived by a cunning subtle device. Wait and see what the next move of the game will be," was practically what the message came to, and thus warned she did nothing.

Four days later a letter came to the Garden House. It told how the search parties had been called off and that as soon as this had happened there had been a robbery, said to be by Raj and Chotu. Within a few hours the air was full of the obvious implication in the form of a definite statement which no man could contradict: so long as the approaches to the foot-hills were patrolled nothing happened; as soon as the guard was lifted, down came Raj and Chotu and robbed.

But the Garden House did not immediately connect what had happened with the previous message of warning. The few and fugitive glimpses of Raj and Chotu as they wandered among the mountains had been too few and too fugitive to give grounds for certainty that they had not fallen. There was no way just then of reaching them. But there were ways of finding the truth. The country was searched.

The searchers were honest. They had no axe to grind. None of them had an anna's pay for the work. They were men who, for one reason or another, were keen to know whether Raj was living straight or not. They had relatives and friends in almost every town and village in the neighbourhood; and, to make them still more evidently unprejudiced as witnesses, they were of different castes. They all returned with the same word: "This is not Raj. It is a deception of some kind, but of what kind we cannot yet discover." "I met a police constable who is a friend of my uncle, so we had a pleasant talk," said one of them. "And he told me all about that visit to you. He was certain the story was a hoax. He told me he had excellent reason to think Raj and Chotu were in the northern hills" (he named the very valley where, as it afterwards transpired, they were at the time of the robbery), "and could not possibly have visited a village so far south at the time named."

And another messenger, a Hindu who knew no English, returned with a curious word: "It is known that there have been articles in the English newspaper saying that Raj is a Christian now, and has forsaken his sin. There are some, and they are not Christians, who say that what has happened is the answer to that."

Soon it was known how the answer had been framed. Several men who were aware of the plot to blacken Raj's name told it. Their womenfolk knew of it. They had overheard a discussion

about it. "If Raj comes in we will fear no one; we will tell it all in open Court," said two of the bravest of the men. "We do not know where he was on the night of that robbery; but we know where he was not. Yes, we shall say so in Court."

But their courage might fail them. It could not be counted upon. To give such evidence in Court would be to risk ruin for themselves and their families. And after all, was it of great value? Was there not just one unassailable proof of innocence? If only a man could be found who could prove an alibi, then Raj and Chotu could be cleared. But who was the man? Where was the man?

Among the searchers who went out from the Garden House was a man who knew all the villages on the southern plain and he happened upon the plougher to whom Raj had committed Gir's name; but that good plougher was deaf and dumb. And yet the searcher who knew the man well began to wonder if the clue to the greatly desired alibi could not be found through him. Had he not been in touch with Raj before? Did he not know anyone who could tell where Raj had been during that week? and especially on the day of the robbery?

He put this to the plougher, but the plougher slowly shook his head. To his simple mind the only thing that appealed was Raj's imperative, "Bury it deep under thy ploughing. Tell it to no one." So he turned upon even this anxious friend of Raj that impassive countenance that so well matched his occupation. And he went on ploughing. At last it occurred to him to take a day off work and find Gir and consult with him. Eagerly and at once Gir came to the Garden House. Never was man more welcome.

"This is he, Gir, the man who knows," said the friend who introduced him.

"Yes, I am Gir," said he, and stood like a short and rather stumpy tree, foursquare to all winds; and dealing not at all in the usual preamble of the East, he stretched forth a pair of gnarled old fists and said, "Raj was in the forest, up in the Valley of the Seven Caves. I saw him, so did many others, charcoal burners and the like. We saw him on the day of the robbery, and the day after, and on all the days of that week. What lies those are!"

And he shook his fists as if he were shaking them in the face of the liars. "What disgusting lies!" And he shrivelled up his nose as if he had caught a whiff of those lies and did not like the smell of them.

"Wilt thou tell this in Court?" Carunia asked him. He

hesitated. "It is a serious thing to go against the *polees*. I have a wife and family." But he thought it over and then: "It would be the act of a coward to be silent," he said. And he told of others who would, he believed, be ready to speak, the charcoal burners of northern villages and a woodman or two: "They know of Raj's resolve to live a straight life and they all love him, as all men do who know him. Yes, they will speak to save him. I know they will. And count on me, count on my word," and as if to pledge himself to himself he repeated it twice, "Count on my word." You can count on nobody, says the West sometimes about the East. It is a mistake: there are some on whom you can count.

Meanwhile Authority had motored off to inquire into the robbery, and Dass, a man of leisure and interested in his fellows, put on a pair of gold-rimmed dark glasses, and his favourite magenta, which now hung, like a spray of bougainvillia, over a pale green shirt; and he followed. And as that inquiry proceeded, Dass mixed in the crowd, an inconspicuous snapper-up of unconsidered trifles; and he found himself wondering what would happen if, instead of the handful of worms (as he called them) carefully prepared for acceptance, he had thrust his trifles into Authority's view.

The facts of a matter such as this may be impossible to gather anywhere, but sometimes they emerge in the crowd, and these did that day. However, no one spoke except the witnesses. And Dass, reflecting compassionately that the chief white man in charge of that inquiry had probably never told a lie in his life, and so was terribly at a loss as he handled that jumble of lies, watched the careful taking down of the carefully edited evidence, and shrugging his shoulders and muttering something not unlike a misquotation of a certain classic:

> Ah, what avails the legal bent,
> And what the official word,
> Before the undoctored incident
> That actually occurred?

he departed.

"A perfect jumble that," was his summing up afterwards, "lies and lies all rolled up and shuffled together and given to him; and behind in the crowd some knew and looked on and wondered if he would accept them; but no one dared speak. Oh, there was very good evidence ready."

But Dass, who had learned the value of truth, wondered why a man's character did not seem to count where the giving of evidence was concerned. He came to understand things better

as the months went on. How can anyone, white or brown, learn the real character of man or woman, or even of the people as a whole, unless he lives among them, as nearly as may be one of themselves ; and not for a day or two only, but for many patient years ?

It was thus that the air was filled with poison-gas.

PART VI

There have been hours when the black rain covered the mountains and the rain-swept plains lay black as death. And there have been times when his prospects looked as cheerless, as abandoned. But to-day, though the rain is not over, the mountains are shining and the great billowy clouds are white and soft and gentle. And to-day, though to the eye of sense all is as hopeless as ever (except that there is thankfulness in our hearts, for the men are being kept true), I cannot but hope. We may be defeated, but Christ is not defeated. The gates of hell shall not prevail against Him.

From a letter written during the course of events.

CHAPTER I

THE TAIL WAGS THE HEAD

"THERE'S right good material in him, sound wood, not a rotten fibre. I know all about his falling into crime, there was never a more daring dacoit, and that sort of thing had to be stopped of course, but the man himself was no criminal. They could have done anything with him if only they had known him apart from his criminal record, known the man I mean, the *real* man. But how could they know? And he did not know that they could not know, and now they will never know," and the speaker, a Hindu gentleman, respected by Hindus and Christians alike, sighed heavily. "I see no light, I see no way out," he said; "there are thousands who would sign a petition asking for his pardon, but it would never get through." And yet even those Raj had robbed, the most generous of them at least, would not have blocked such a petition. "We want him back," said not one but almost all the people at that time. "If he promises not to rob, he will never touch any man's goods again. And has he not given his word?"

But the poison-gas was already filling the air, and some were caught in those vapours. "And yet I know the whole tale to be false," continued the Hindu gentleman, "and I only wish I could speak out and say what I know, but that would be to ruin my young relatives who are in Government service"; and he told of an experience which had forced him to recognise the subterranean ways in vogue. "They are moles who do this dirty

work," he added indignantly, "and to me it is an amazing thing that such tools are tolerated by the Great, but they are tolerated. And now it is not a fair capture that is contemplated." And he drew the side of his hand across the back of his heel in a significant gesture that showed the cutting of a knife.

"That will be done, he will never walk again, they say; but, as before, whatever happens will happen in the effort to overpower the dangerous criminal," and he smiled slightly. "It is a thousand pities he was not encouraged to be patient for a while, for there was no venom in him."

Visits such as these enlightened eyes till then hardly open to the strange unlawfulness that is covered by an appearance of lawfulness in India. What was to be the end of these things? What the end for Raj?

"If only we could go direct to the Greatest and ask him to let us stand surety—and send Raj back on probation, and you could give him honest work and a chance to prove what is in him, we would do it," said a shrewd old man one day. "But in such matters as this, how is it? The tail wags the head."

"But for the breaking of laws there must be punishment. The Sirkar is protecting you all by guarding the roads from dacoity. Was it better in the days when there were Thugs?" (Thugs, professional killers and robbers, used to haunt the roads. They made friends with unsuspicious travellers, even posing as guides and protectors—"against the wicked Thugs." In the end they strangled their victims in some quiet place and buried them in graves which men sent in advance had prepared.)

But the old man turned from the greater to the less, that less which at the moment was oppressing. "If we had Raj back and the Sirkar made him head of *polees*, there would be no robbing at all on the roads" (a frequent word, absurd though it may sound). "And has he not been punished for all he did? Is not his home broken up? Was not his wife done to death? Has he not suffered himsa such as the Law would never have appointed? Nay, if only we could, we would press through all that come between and go to the Greatest."

CHAPTER II

THE PILGRIMS' CHORUS

When Raj and Chotu heard of that first robbery, as they did a few days after its occurrence, they were aghast; for they knew how easily the crime could be proved against them. But they

took heart to hope. Men whom they could trust had seen them on the northern mountains every day of that week, and there was Gir, who had business in the forest and knew all their movements. Of these some would be, they believed, ready to come forward and prove an alibi. But Carunia feared she hardly knew what, as she pondered the word that held a cold light to the crime committed in the name of the two men. Was this the "cunning subtle device" of which her Hindu friend had warned her? And she recalled the old man's suggestion that the people might be allowed to stand surety for Raj. But what if he proved unworthy? Then every good man in the country would side with the Sirkar and get him in. Present conditions would be exactly reversed; for now Authority was up against the best of the people, not the worst. In case there were reasons why such a proposal could not be considered, Carunia kept within her another thought.

"If only we could be fortified first," Raj had said; and was there not something in his plea? Would it be impossible to ask for a month, or even a week under whatever surveillance was appointed, with any guarantee? (There was no difficulty about the guarantee.) Given such an interval, Carunia believed that Raj would be ready for a willing acceptance of the jail. Once let him enter into his full inheritance as a Christian, and what would walls and chains matter to him? "Shut in from fields of air," he would be free.

She had one great comfort. Immediately after the men's escape from the district jail, she had been told that, if they were caught, they would certainly be sent to a more distant place, and she had been advised to write beforehand to the Government Servant who at that time was over all jails, and ask for leave, in the event of their capture, to see them and teach them.

The answer, which was very kind, had greatly cheered her. She hoped that it would show the men the true attitude of those in authority towards them, and encourage them to come in. They had responded gratefully. Just then the crime charged to them had filled them with new apprehension; and while they waited in uncertainty, and Carunia waited in mingled fear and hope, a summons came to her to meet a Government Servant concerned in the capture of the outlaws.

And as she travelled, the engine of the car appeared to be making music. She hardly heeded it at first, being occupied by thoughts about the interview ahead. So the music beat on for some miles unregarded. At last she became acutely aware of

its movement and listened. It was the mighty music of Wagner's "Pilgrims' Chorus."

Phrase by phrase she heard it, beaten out as it were by the little engine itself. And the hellish laughter rose and rose, waxing more and more hellish as the song, undaunted, struggled through the curling, leaping chords, till the burst of demoniacal laughter fell back like a spent wave, and the music closed in the triumph of an undefeated song.

. . . . . .

"They are robbing now," said Authority with the finality that settles things.

"But they were far away at the time of the robbery. We know men who are ready to prove an alibi."

Then Authority said, said it plainly (and that plainness was surely only kindness in disguise, for it would have been terrible to have plunged whole households into distress), that any man knowing where the outlaws were, and failing to inform the police, was a criminal in the eye of the Law.

But for a minute or two Carunia heard nothing of what was proceeding from the arm-chair opposite. The room with its furniture melted into the forest. The men would be sure to hear of this interview. They would hope, they would believe she would have been able to convince the Great that they were not robbing. They must be told what had been said about any who could prove an alibi. Raj would never ask for help at such a cost. Then there could be no fair trial. Were they ready to come in on such conditions? They were not heroic yet. They were two poor men struggling up from the mud. Would they rise to such heights?

And Authority said distinctly that there had been no himsa. Carunia was mistaken in believing the talk of the people. An armed man had to be overcome and captured. In the tussle he had been knocked about, but himsa? leg-breaking on purpose, ankle-twisting, and so on? that was sheer nonsense. It had never happened at all.

If To-morrow could speak to To-day, how startled To-day would be. A few months after the play was played to a finish, and Raj was beyond man's praise or blame, Carunia, longing to bring the message of life and pardon to the men (then in jail) who had tortured him, and whom he had forgiven, saw them and told them the secret of that forgiveness.

The brothers stood staring stolidly, each man with his long

ankle-chain held in his left hand. They looked hopelessly bad, but is any man hopelessly bad?

Presently the older of the two, a ruffian with a shock of grey hair not yet reduced to jail tidiness, for the men were not yet convicted, burst out fiercely:

"The thing is true, and we are now suffering from the judgment of the God of Raj. What the people said was true. We did that himsa. We did it *so*," and in horrid pantomime he showed how it was done. The younger and even more ruffianly brother nodded grimly. That man, on a later day, boasting in another jail of his prowess with regard to Raj, was taught his lesson by his fellow-prisoners, for they set on him and heartily thrashed him. Officialdom, human at heart after all, turned a blind eye to the spy-glass that day. So Justice for once had her way.

But now the brothers, who stood fingering their chains uneasily, had much more to tell. The flood-gates once opened, out poured the flood. They told why they did that himsa. They told what followed. They told of their horror when Raj escaped from jail and of their astonishment when they were sure that he would not take vengeance. They told, too, of how they had hardened themselves, and personated him in the long series of robberies done in his name.

If only To-morrow could speak! Or if in dumb procession the things that it will hold could pass before us as we wait, to what different ends we should turn our intentions now! Had those events stalked into the room just then, and stood by the three who talked, what would they have seen? Seven shades of dead men. Women crushed and crying would have been there too, and wrecks of ruined homes, and many griefs and shames. And the sullen stream of himsa and corruption not to be named. And the pulling down of a flag and the dragging of it in the dust. Could they have seen, would the matter have been otherwise handled that morning?

"And when they are caught" (ice-cold was that "*when*"), "you will be allowed one interview, *one only*." The words fell on one half-broken already. A flood surged over her. But "Christ suffers to sink maybe, but not to drown"; and suddenly a Hand swept through the waters and caught her—"O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" and she knew that the refusal to allow the men the help they craved touched the heart of God. This was His business. He would see it through. This battle did not lie with flesh and blood. She was to ask for nothing more from man. The whole matter belonged

to the sphere of the spiritual. There would be little of the tourney with its gracious ways. It was going to be like the music, horrible——And the music of that weird Chorus sounded so loud just then that she almost wondered why the other two who sat in the room did not hear it——But it would end in an undefeated song.

CHAPTER III

"THEY" SAY

BACK to the Garden House Carunia returned with everything in her keyed up to the resolve to try again. The Englishman who spoke the kind word to Raj when he was first arrested, had said, "If he comes to you, I'll go out at once and receive his surrender." But would Raj consider coming in if others must be involved? It would be much more difficult to influence him towards it now. But what were difficulties to Him with whom she had to do? And if the men came in, in spite of this charge against them, and trusted Him to protect their innocent friends, would He not work on their behalf? So the careful watching for an opportunity to reach them, the perilous, quiet efforts to use to the utmost any such chance, began again.

But one day Raj's kinsmen, and with them one of another caste, who till then had been convinced of his honesty, came to Carunia:

"The matter must be dropped, for Raj seems to have lost hope and he has broken out. We can have nothing more to do with him."

Then sorrowfully they told how Raj had come down on the previous evening, and in wrath at being repulsed when he demanded money, had set a man's house on fire. "And the reason we are sure that it is not one taking his name but Raj himself, is that the robber appears to have done the thing Raj would naturally do. For the people say that he ran to the man whose knee he had grazed when he flashed his gun (nay, he shot no bullet, only empty gunpowder, to scare them off), and he lifted him up, for the man had fallen in terror towards the fire, and his cloth had caught fire. And Raj with his own hands crushed out the fire; and he carried the man in his arms to the road where a crowd had gathered; and he called two men to him and said, "Go, take him to the hospital." And not till he saw it done did he leave for the forest. Who but Raj would have done this thing?"

"But they say he carried off a bag of money. So he is back to his old ways and we can have nothing more to do with him," repeated Raj's kinsmen.

"Where is the man who was hurt?" asked Carunia.

"In the hospital groaning on his bed" was the gloomy answer.

"Could anyone go and see him and hear what he has to say?"

"I will go," said the young casteman who had been disappointed in Raj.

And he returned with the same tale, save that the wounded man knew nothing of the carrying off of that bag of rupees. The wound was a mere graze, and the man said, though undoubtedly Raj had done it, it was not intentional.

"But it ends all," said the casteman sadly. "It ends all."

It did not end all, but it did end hope that Raj had done with his old ways; and, as Carunia had assured Authority so confidently that he had, she felt bound in common honesty to say she was mistaken. For six sorrowful days nothing else was known. Something stronger than a fear of false comfort held the Garden House from daring to credit the whispers that began to rise about the reputed robbery. The tale did its wicked worst. Some in the official world who might have been moved to look into Raj's matters were hopelessly alienated and never recovered faith in him. Then at last the truth became known; but to have told openly what had happened to change a morally innocent episode into a criminal charge would have been to end the peace of several weak but otherwise worthy people. Raj had not come down to rob, but had been almost trapped, and to avoid the trap had committed his one crime, fired blank cartridges, hoping to escape in the mêlée. But proof could not be produced. And in any case a lie that has had a six days' start is rarely overtaken by the truth. Sometimes it seems as though lies had wings, while truth soberly walks the ground as if thinking it hardly worth while to hurry, for in the end, "above all things Truth beareth away the victory."

But that lie was another of the thrusts that drove the men off when they might have come in. And though they still continued to drop messages they never said where a reply would find them. "He of whom you know is with us and is mightily helping us," was one message. It had passed through five messengers before it reached Carunia, but it had been faithfully repeated, though not one of the five could have guessed who the mighty Helper was.

Per, too, was reassuring: "These two false charges have driven them off; but Raj is not a man to change his word; he

is still a One Word man. I have been inquiring everywhere and I find that, save only in that black year when he could get no work, and turned from the straight path, he never walked in crooked ways. And even then he was no liar. He has promised. He will try again."

And there was another, Dura, who knew what Raj was doing when he left British India and took refuge in the Native State. He knew of Raj's old record for honesty in business matters; for Dura's own town had been one of Raj's markets, and men there spoke of Raj as of one whose word was his bond. Dura championed Raj wherever he went. He happened to be in British India shortly after this last defeat, when Per to his great joy had got into touch with Raj again, and had found him penitent for his delay, and ready to do what was right, though he realized now that he could not call upon his friends to help him. He was naturally sanguine, and, it may be, hoped that in some other way he would be able to establish his and Chotu's innocence.

The roads were watched with a good deal of vigilance just then; for Garden House letters had been opened, and it was known that there was hope of getting Raj to surrender soon. One night when some travellers from that house were peacefully journeying to the nearest station, a Ford car that was lying apparently asleep by the roadside suddenly woke, flashed her lights into the passing cart, and searched it thoroughly.

This opening of letters, and searching of Garden House people, made any attempt to help the men to come in much more difficult than it would otherwise have been. So the plan was made to send a cart laden with straw to a village near the hills, whence in the course of the evening it would travel along an unfrequented lane, and wait at an appointed place. Its driver would be Per. Dura would be somewhere near by. The men would be hidden in the straw.

By the time this plan was communicated to Raj and Chotu, and a place fixed, there was the expected break in the monsoon, which gave such a plan its opportunity. But there were delays, and the sheet lightning that plays over the sky before rain was illuminating the late evenings and nights; and the hills that look low and dark under starlight and tall and ghostly in moonlight, combined the witchery of both as they rose a white glimmer one moment, and lay back a dark mass the next. And this sign was saying, "Hasten"; for a heavily heaped-up cart of straw travelling in rain would be remarkable and therefore unsafe. Just then a messenger came to the Garden House.

"Raj is very ill: he has fever. Can some medicine go up?

Chotu has sent down for it. There is a man ready to take it up."

Carunia had felt bound not to send anything that would help to keep the men out. But she decided to send quinine and tell Authority that she had done so, when the messenger said, "If a hammock were sent, he would come down. His mind is set that way." And with hope that ever rose alive from its own ashes, the hammock was prepared. But before the quinine could reach Raj, much less the more slowly moving bearers, a cyclone swept up from the sea, crossed the mountains, whirled through the forest and over the plains. The rivers were all in spate; a reservoir burst; bridges went down like twigs on the stream. The quinine could not go up. And above the raging waters, Raj lay, too ill to move.

He was in one of the fair-weather fairy lands of the hills. In and out among the pink balsam bushes and the tree-ferns by the streams, you come upon round pools in the soft earth that tell of elephants going to drink. You meet signs of them on every side, sometimes signs you do not love, for the elephants think nothing of that exquisite decoration of the forest, Logodium, the light-footed climbing fern; they break through the delicate green veil and trample it under their careless feet, and pull great wisps of it out, and fan themselves with it. Tiger, boar, sambhur—you may hear them all, meet them, too, if you urgently wish to do so. You may come upon the cleared ring where the forest people tell you the elephants dance; you may come upon any wonderful woodland thing, for there are waterfalls deep in the pathless forest, and reaches of shallow water whose borders are blue with bladderwort, and caves that yawn like the mouths of giants, and sometimes you come upon a tiny shrine where a few coppers lie, telling of those who penetrate these far-away places and wish to propitiate the unseen gods of the wilds. That forest in sunshine is a place to dream in, a place wherein to forget the grief and the hurt of life.

But it was not fair weather then. It was the kind of weather that makes us feel what we are—mere atoms before the passions of the universe. And the man hidden there under thundering skies never forgot. And as he lay in the weakness of slow convalescence, his prospects must have seemed as dark as the cheerless dark of the wood when the rain and the mist wrapped it in gloom, or a great wind roared through the ravine and shook the forest, hurling down tall trees with mighty crashes that broke the smaller trees within reach and heaped ruin on the shivering little things below.

And then, just then, there was a robbery on the road sixteen miles from that place above the river. And of course it was the work of Raj and Chotu. The police sent the young trader who was robbed to tell Carunia who had known him from a child.

She listened to his story. There was no doubt that he believed the tale he told, and it appeared in the newspapers a few days later with that wealth of detail that somehow strikes conviction into the mind of the reader.

" How dost thou know the robbers were Raj and Chotu ? "

" I saw Raj once in the train when he was being taken to jail a few months ago. And who but Raj would have laughed, and given me back five rupees ? Besides, the robbers were wearing the kind of clothes it is said Raj and Chotu wear. No white had they, but khaki shorts, and shirts, and gold-edged turbans. Oh, certainly, it was he. And he said, ' I am the Red Tiger,' and he called, ' Hai, thou Chotu, come hither.' And they let the other carts pass, because they were driven by men of their own caste."

" How so sure that was the reason why those carts passed ? "

" It is said that they never rob their own. A jewelled woman may cross the Plains alone, and not a jewel will be touched ; but women of other castes will be robbed."

" But thou art of their own caste."

The lad reflected for a moment. " Even so, they say so. They say our caste will be safe."

" They say. Who say ? "

He shuffled. " Oh, ' They ' say," he said.

" They " talk much in India. And they talked to purpose through the days that were now at hand. But that robbery was a mistake that was never repeated. There was never again a robbery from any man or in any house of the caste to which the outlaws belonged. All other castes but one (and this omission was unobserved, but it happened to be the caste of those who were personating Raj and Chotu) suffered badly. There were no robberies at the Garden House, though thirteen petty thefts within the fortnight after that first meeting by the Lotus Water had warned that house what to expect. Now there were none, for " They " knew that no one would believe the Red Tiger would rob there or rob anyone going there. Carters, a day's journey distant, told travellers to say they were going to the Garden House, and all would be well. They (not the carters who knew better, but " They ") pointed to the security the house enjoyed as proof of some kind of understanding with Raj. The wildest tales were circulated ; " They " had a busy time.

Photos by F. E. Heath

A FAIRY POOL

A pool in one of the fair-weather fairy-lands of the hills. Raj's caves were almost always near running water, and in order to leave no track or scent by which men or hunting dogs could trace him, he used to walk up through the river to his cave. (Page 135.)

RAJ'S CHILDREN GATHERING RUSHES

On the roadside where the robbery "was committed by Raj and Chotu" when Raj was lying very ill in the forest on the mountain seen in the background. In the foreground are his children, gathering rushes. (Page 136.)

And there was no doubt that there was someone on the roads very like Raj. His own child, Delight, was deceived by the resemblance, and one evening in the dusk, when out with some other children, she broke from them with a cry of joy, "My father!" But it was not her father.

And when the water went down, the news of this robbery on the road reached Raj. "There is more in this than appears," he said, feeling the sinister menace and shrinking back affrighted. And for a long time there was no more talk of coming in.

CHAPTER IV

THE SHADOW OF THE SUBSTANCE

It is curious, in a story which deals with things so material as mountains, forests, caves, food—or going deeper, with the more elemental passions and emotions which belong to every human story—it is curious in such writing to find oneself constantly approaching, almost touching, the immaterial, a Shadow, as it were, of a Something out of sight, which indeed is the real substance of the tale. Sometimes the Shadow is pure like the violet shadows of mountain peaks in the evening. Sometimes it is dreadful.

The material of this chapter is the stealthy creeping form of an oldish man as he moves with furtive steps, and with eyes, like a weasel's, glancing apprehensively, or, like a chameleon's, looking two ways at once; and he is creeping towards the forest.

"It is true that she has quite given thee up: she believed thou didst set the house on fire. She confessed it to the Great. She believes thou didst murder Undu the Rat, in thine anger at being drugged. She believes thou art robbing again, thou and Chotu, and she has given thee up; she has ceased to pray for thee.

"And Per, whom thou trustest, has given thee up. He was all the time seeking to get the reward. It is higher now than it was. Each new crime pushes it further up, which is to their advantage who report the robbing. It will touch two thousand rupees in time. And he has a young family."

Raj was listening, his face working, his fists clenched.

"Nay, never would she; is she not my mother? And never would he; he is my elder brother."

"She is of the same caste as the Sirkar: consider that. Thou callest her mother. Does a mother not care for her son in distress? Has she ever sent thee one little anna's worth of rice?"

" She sent these rugs."

" Aye, to get thee over the mountains in the rain to fall into a trap. Were the watchers not waiting for thee? Didst thou not see them with thine own eyes? "

Deep in his puzzled heart, though he had never owned it even to Chotu, Raj had not understood why she whom he thought of so fondly as mother did not act a mother's part to a son in distress. A few rupees, would it have been a great matter to her to give them? This pressure of poverty, did she not know of it? It would have been so much easier to hold out against his tempters, if only he could have said, " What need is there to rob? See, my mother has a care for me."

And then the almost capture each time he had tried to come in? But no, his soul revolted against it. That could not be. She would never have done that. Well, but what of the silence now? What of the absence of one little anna of help? He had never asked for it. Ah, but did she not know there was always a sore need?

How could Raj know that all that was human and woman in her was one fierce ache to help him? How could he know that she was trusted not to do this thing, or that she believed she was so trusted, and that this held her back, so that nothing could make her feel it right to do it? How could he know? He could not know. So he fought this new battle in a grieved and bitter silence. He would not discuss with anyone that which hurt so desperately.

" And Per, the man in white, was he true? " It was not likely. He was not a rich man. He had a wife and children. It was known he had no pay for this arduous work of going up and down the mountain; he was not working for money. He was living on his savings. But did this mean that he had hopes of getting something much better?

" And be it noted he has not come lately. Hast thou seen him lately? Finding it impossible to trap thee and secure the Government reward, he comes no more." The weasel-eyed man said this in one form or another over and over again. d Per did not come. They sent messages down asking him to come.

And they could not know that the messages were intercepted and that the weasel-eyed man had the handling of Per's guide, when he searched, as he daily did, on the mountains for the slightest sign of them.

Then, as India does, Raj cast his lot into the lap. He would fix a time; if by that time Per came, he would know that this that he had heard was false. If he did not come, it could only

mean that he must not trust him any more. " O God," cried Raj in his extremity, " O God, hear. Suffer us not to be abandoned. O God, hear."

The fixed date passed ; Per did not come. And a cloud hung over the forest, and the rain never ceased. Had God covered Himself with a cloud that his prayer should not pass through ?

CHAPTER V

IN THE WET WOODS

ONE day, as they wandered in the wet woods when the rain had abated, chilled in body, chilled in soul, they talked this matter out.

The man of the weasel's eyes, the deceiver, was one who had proved his friendship in many ways. He was even now bringing food. It was impossible to doubt him, and Per had not come within the set time. Therefore, painful " therefore," it was not safe to trust him even if he came.

Presently they heard a low warning voice ; it was someone talking to another man. The voice was so modulated that they knew it was saying, " Disappear. An enemy is near." Like the wild things of the wood they disappeared silently, invisibly, and watched.

It was Per. He was toiling up the hill, still at some distance from them, looking up and down and round about for the red cap that in other days used to be hung on the bough of a tree, sign that somewhere not far away Raj and Chotu waited. Whatever the messenger had brought would be put down near that tree, and if the outlaws were satisfied they would advance, and many a merry talk and many an anxious one too had followed. When Per had seen that red cap, he had always waited confidently, knowing that in a moment there would be the whistle of welcome, and one or other of the men would appear, and lead him to the cave up the river, or in thick brushwood, or among great trees. And then Raj would spread his rug on the floor of the cave (a little sign of reverence), and they would kneel on it together, and Per would pray for them both, and then they would talk, and Per would exhort them and hearten them. Those talks were life to the banished men, a comforting in the midst of comfortless troubles. But now no red cap hung on the bough, there was no low whistle like the whistle of a bird to guide his feet. Per wearily climbed on, but never caught a flutter of khaki,

or saw the sad eyes watching him as he turned and went downhill.

Next morning, weary, perplexed, but undaunted, he came to the Garden House.

"I felt as if they were near, but I never saw them. Only this I know, Raj never broke his promise. He will not rob again."

But the country was filling with a very different tale. Another dacoity had been committed, a curious mixture of real robbery and a Raj-like joke. "Oh for proof evident to all that he is clear," Carunia said to Per, for there was no proof of his integrity (the alibi being forbidden) that the world would recognise. And people who did not know the men or their friends or anything that could be said on the other side, declared that there was no doubt—Raj had broken out again, and some said, who could wonder? For the temptation upon him now that others had robbed in his name, was so tremendous, and man at his strongest is so weak, that what, save only the power of God, could hold him up for an hour? So prayer rose for him night and day; like a fountain? No, the word is too pretty, too tame—rose like lava from burning deeps. "O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come."

CHAPTER VI

TORCHES IN THE SADHU'S CAVE

And now, thinking themselves forsaken, Raj and Chotu went to the sadhu's cave, a mile or so above the valley where the river flows over the coloured rock. A clinging grey mist hung over the wet woods, and they were lonely and quiet. No birds sang among the dripping branches; only the shouts of cataracts calling to one another and the sullen roar of the river filled the air, and to the grieved and downcast heart the thundering of great waters is threatening, not jubilant. The roof and walls of the cave oozed with moisture; looking in, the men saw only a yawning gloom. The ground underfoot was sodden.

It was a strange cave, even when seen in sunshine; dark influences seemed to haunt it. A mass of rock, a hundred feet long and very wide and thick, had been projected upon huge boulders that stood embedded in the bank that fell to the river. These rocks divided it roughly into four caverns or rooms, through one of which unlighted water found its way out of some deep recess and filled the cavern with a chill clammy air. The rocks were clammy.

For purposes of safety the cave was perfect; two men could elude scores; but it had not always been the refuge of outlaws, a sadhu had lived there. "He who holds his hands up," the people had called him, impressed by the sight of him sitting on his stone with his hands held up in prayer, and many pilgrims had found their way to him from the temple below. Marut, the herb doctor, had once led a party to see him, for Marut was ever a seeker after wisdom, and he had a hope that the sadhu, knowing how far the people had travelled, would open his lips and feed them. But he could not be sure, for some sadhus are too holy to speak at all. To his humble question the sadhu answered nothing for a long time, while Marut waited, his grave expectant eyes fixed earnestly upon the saint's impassive face. At last the holy man opened his mouth and said:

"How can I who came here for my own soul's good have anything to give to thee? I have nothing." And humbly and reverently Marut led his party down.

Now the sadhu had gone, no one knew whither. And the cave was empty when Raj and Chotu went there, before the end of the rains.

There was no pleasant view from the cave; a black rock faced it, and against the rock grew a fantastic mass of twisted leafless stems.

Near the sadhu's stone in this dismal cave there were three cooking-stones, the roof overhead was blackened with the smoke of many fires. Raj pulled a flat stone out and set it near the cooking-stones, and on it Chotu ground any condiment they had for those uncertain meals. How food ever reached that distant place it is difficult to understand. They were many miles from the Plains. At no time could more than three or four days' rice be carried up, to carry more would have been too noticeable. And yet it was taken there and to still less accessible places in those boundless mountain forests.

On a day of special sadness and despondency, Raj sat on the sadhu's stone in a silence which Chotu, who was cooking beside him, did not care to disturb. And as Raj sat in that deep silence, memory lighted her torches one by one, and unseen hands carried them along the roads below. He was down there now, down in the sticky heat of the Plains, in the midst of the carousing and the dare-devilry of old days. The flaring torches showed them. He looked and looked.

He saw a table set out on the road at night. He saw the faces of the men gathered round it, saw the candle blown about in the soft puffs of wind, and the drink and the cards on the table.

He saw a cart come up, felt the delicious joke bubbling within him, heard the laugh that followed; shook with laughter there, as he sat on the cold stone.

Now the brown roots of the banyan trees swept the ground, and he and his men were among them. A cart was rumbling along. Ah, but the woman had cried out in sorrow, and he was ashamed. How good it was to remember that she was not hurt, but helped. He was glad he had ever done anything good. But there were other carts and other people, he saw them too and the wild *furore* of the attack, the excitement of the mad race for safety, that panting run that sent the blood thumping in the ears.

And the torches showed the roads, the very flowers that bordered them; there was one that for miles was fringed by a plant that had flame-coloured balls threaded on its stem like beads. And sometimes the road ran between water, where lotus grew in thousands, and so close together that it was as though he looked at water-meadows thick with flowers that stood up straight among their large flat leaves like roses—for often they were rose-coloured—or like white queens that showed their hearts of gold. And their scent was like nothing else on earth. Ah, but he had spoiled the peace of those water-meadows.

And there was the road of the Split Rock. One of his caves was just above it. He used to put the jewels he took from the women in the fissure of the rock. There they would lie all day, within a hundred feet of the people on the road, but safe as if buried in the earth. Then, at night, two of the band would go and retrieve them and carry them up to the cave, and the loot would be divided round the camp-fire. Then down he would go with his share, and make the heart of many a poor man glad. Oh, the jolly weddings he had carried through! How the poor blessed him! And yet there was no joy in the thought. The blessing was stained.

And he saw the Mothers' Shrine near the Split Rock. He saw scores of babies' cradles piled up on the stones and swung from the branches of the banyan tree in mute appeal to the merciful goddess of mothers to send little children to them. He saw the smooth oiled stone that was her symbol hung with coloured glass bangles (for as she was a woman god, would she not want some bangles?) He saw the oleander wreaths, and the faint sweet smell rose up to him, and he was swiftly caught away and was standing under another tree and his mother was with him, and she had a pink wreath in her hands, and his were full of those same pink flowers. How clear it all was—that whiteness that had first meant God to him, that pinkness so soft, so sweet—and

his mother. But the tinkle of a bell recalled him. He saw the bell, it was fastened on the bough of a tree near a poor little empty cradle that was tied to it by a wire. And now the old priestess was drifting slowly out from among the shadows of the grey rocks behind the tree. She it was who tended the goddess of the mothers and kept the hollow in the stone by the roadside filled with ashes, so that wayfarers could stop and rub the sacred ashes on their foreheads. How often he had rubbed those ashes on his forehead, there by the Mothers' Shrine !

He had rubbed them on that day when he tried to play that practical joke on Sakuni. The Split Rock and Sakuni, how the one called to the other, what a pity it was that the women could not find him ! If only he had come hot-foot, and been taken in, or better still bought off, what food for mirth it would have been for the countryside which hated him for his himsa ! The torch burned red just then, red with a dangerous flaring-up of wrath. How easy to shoot that vile Sakuni even now ! But no, he had promised ; he must not take revenge.

And the torches moved on : he was watching two strings of rice carts as they passed ; his men were keen to loot, he was holding them back by a word.

" Nay, touch them not " (this was the first string of carts). " Do they not belong to the charitable landowner ? He is kind to the poor. Let them pass."

And the second ? As that second string passed, he saw himself draw his men closer round him. " Not a sack of any one of those carts shall be touched. Are they not for the children's food ? "

And again he was glad as he looked : he was in the Village of the Herons ; the brothers were urging something : " Wait by that gully, it will be easy to waylay him ; what a chance the gods have given to thee, O Captain, for he is very rich." But they were talking of that same man whose carts he had let pass on the road.

" Never," he had said, turning from them, " he is excellent, a virtuous man. Not for gold will I touch him. We are not out against such as he. Touch him not, I command you." And they had slunk off like dogs with their tails between their legs. And he had thrilled with the sense of power to forbid and command.

Yes, those were good days, lived out in the open ; risky, of course, but *alive*. A man's life, for good or ill. But it was ill. His conscience told him that. What right had he to touch other men's goods ? Many a day was wholly bad. It was all bad as he looked back. No good had come of it, but very much sorrow.

How clearly those torches showed everything at the Split

Rock! He could see the broad yellow-ochre and black lines on the northern face of the wall of the cleft, the little ferns and trailing creepers under the sheltering western base, the elfin garden of pink and lilac cups and bells, the bush with its green berries, half smothered in the vine that climbed it; and he saw the cactus, too, that caught at his men as they ran up the hill.

What a chaos of rocks there was behind, as if a giant had played ball there; one of the balls hung poised to fall, and yet never did; and beyond, it was as if the giant's head turned to stone looked down at them; and from that head they could see miles of banyan-bordered road winding calmly on. And across the road there were rice fields, and little upstanding rocks like islands in a sea of green; and beyond them the Finger Crags whose edges are like the fingers of a man's hand.

What a time they had in that wild country above the road! He could smell the lemon grass even now and the aromatic scents of the crushed herbs they trod on, as they climbed the tumbled crags.

Oh, to be free, to walk those roads a free, honest man! But that could never be. Any hope that it could ever be had perished. If Carunia distrusted him, who would ever believe in him? No sentence would be long enough for him now. Come in? How could he? Then what was there left to look forward to but misery upon misery? "And if only thou wouldst give way and be as they say thou art, there would at least be a sporting chance——" But the sentence was not finished. "Hai, Chotu, let us sing," and seizing his book with vigorous hands, Raj flung back his head and sang with a mighty voice to drown the voices about him and to blow out the torches.

PART VII

Apollyon : *Then Apollyon broke out into a grievous rage, saying, I am an enemy to this Prince ; I hate his person, his laws, and people ; I am come out on purpose to withstand thee.*

Christian : *Apollyon, beware what you do, for I am in the King's highway, the way of holiness, therefore take heed to yourself.*

Apollyon : *Then Apollyon straddled quite over the whole breadth of the way, and said, I am void of fear in this matter, prepare thyself to die ; for I swear by my infernal den thou shalt go no further ; here will I spill thy soul.*

And with that he threw a flaming dart at his breast, but Christian had a shield in his hand, with which he caught it, and so prevented the danger of that.

JOHN BUNYAN,
1628–1692.

" I know that during that long and racking march of thirty-six hours over the unnamed mountains and glaciers of S. Georgia it seemed to me often that we were four, not three. I said nothing to my companions on the point, but afterwards Worsley said to me, ' Boss, I had a curious feeling on the march that there was another person with us.' Crean confessed to the same idea. One feels ' the dearth of human words, the roughness of mortal speech,' in trying to describe things intangible, but a record of our journeys would be incomplete without a reference to a subject very near to our hearts."

SHACKLETON.

CHAPTER I

ANOTHER KIND OF LIGHT

MEANWHILE, constantly anxious and seeking for news that would give ground for Per's confident, " Nay, he is not doing these things. Do I not know him ? " Carunia had written another letter and given it to Dura from the far country, for Dura thought that he could find the two men though Per had failed. She implored them to come in, every month they stayed out made it harder for them, for it gave the opportunity to pile up fresh crimes against them. In what other direction did any hope lie ? What if surrender would lead to the worst that man could do ? (For she recognised the impossibility of their proving an alibi. They would not wreck their friends.) Even so, God would stand by them ; whatever befell them, inward joy would be given to them, and fortitude beyond their dreams. There was no risk in such a pledge, for if only they rose to this supreme act of faith,

the very abandon of their committal would be like the swimmer's faith that proves the upbearing powers beneath. "Yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand." "Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." These and a hundred other Scriptures answered all questions, and made it appear but a little thing thus to pledge the Lord our God.

So Dura went up with the letter, and disappeared into a blanket of cloud, and searched up and down the ravines, but in vain. For by means of all manner of false messages sent by the wily weasel, he was continually headed off from the valley of the coloured rocks which led up to the desolate cave, and he returned with the letter, which he dared entrust to no one, undelivered.

Then certain spies and the weasel worked together—a deadly combine, for the weasel was in Raj's confidence—and the spies went up in the form of friends, and they told Raj what the weasel had told him, that even Carunia had utterly forsaken him, and was helping the Sirkar to entrap him. He must not wonder at that. Was she not of their caste? Who does not know that after all caste counts for most? Each time he had followed her advice he had all but fallen into the hands of the police. And what help had she given him?—always the test question. And they told again that poisonous half-truth about her letter to Authority. Of the letter that followed when the truth emerged, he was told nothing. And Raj, stabbed in a tender place, was silent. But still he held to his faith and would not believe them. "No, it is a lie, did she not come to me in the hospital? She will never go back on me," he said; though by some strange twist of mental processes his trust in Per had perished, this held firm. But as the days passed and no message came from her, he was driven to accept the cruel word, "She has forsaken thee." Beyond that he would not go. Nothing could compel him to believe she had tried to betray him. It was sad enough as it was; for he knew her so little that it did not cross his mind that, even did she believe him to have fallen, she would still go on loving him and watching for his recovery. He thought she would give him up, and think he had deceived her all along.

And now, in the depths of his depression, he did what he had never done before. He pushed his song-books aside; and the walls of the cave closed round him, and the walls were made of despair. "There is no one to sift and see if I be grain or if I be husk"—that was his one thought then. The foundations of his confidence were undermined. Never, never had he imagined that Carunia would desert him.

For a while it was thus; there was no human comforter; and the comforts of heaven seemed very far from this near and difficult life.

When the weather cleared they went down to the Plains, and that always meant risk of trouble. Trouble met them there, for they were more than foolish and gave the police excellent reason for charging them with robbery. When their finances ran low, their custom was to go to the house of a friend and ask for help, but one day they yielded so far as to stop a cart full of jewelled women, and they said, "We are Raj and Chotu, and we are in need," "not demanding," as the women declared afterwards in telling the tale, "but asking." Then as they stood chatting on the roadside by the cart, they discovered that its owner, whose women had already given them some jewels, had once shown kindness to Raj when first he was arrested. And upon recognizing him, Raj hurriedly thrust back the jewels given. "Take them back," he insisted. "That one kindness is enough."

In spite of the assertions of the family concerned, this story naturally grew into something more disreputable, and buttressed the belief that they were robbing on the roads. And they returned disconsolate to their cave.

Then the rain fell again and Raj sat on the sadhu's stone and fought his secret battle; and Chotu squatted near by their one comfort, the fire, and tried to cook tempting meals, turning the little tied-up bundles inside out to find any specially nice thing tucked in by some kindly woman. At last for Raj, a desperate man and a broken-hearted, a light shone, a low voice spoke. Chotu by the fire neither saw nor heard. The air shook with the sound of the river, the great sound that carries a sense of menace as it rolls through the hours of a dark gloomy day; the forest shuddered as it listened to that thunder. No bird sang. But for Raj there was a singing and a light. That light was not like the flare of the torches; it was another kind of light, very clear and quiet, and it showed a calm water two thousand feet below. It was the Lotus Water in sunset. He saw a long reach of rough short grass, tasted of food and drink, heard the word that told him of the Body broken for him, the Blood shed.

He got up, he had to bend his head or it would have struck the roof, but he stood, and squared his shoulders and spoke as if Chotu had been following his thoughts. "Even though she believes we have fallen, let us not sin," he said. "We have washed our feet, shall we walk again in the mud?" It was the final decision, and he never looked back on it. The Hindu who had

been his tempter could do nothing with him. "It is not so easy to ruin him with whom the pressure of Christ's hand still lingers in the palm."

CHAPTER II

LITTLE STORIES OF COMFORT

WHEN the first fight with a fierce temptation had to be fought and won, the sweetness of the place where Raj and Chotu stayed joined forces with the good and loving powers. No fury of waters had urged Raj to vehemence; Nature at her friendliest had led him into peace. And flowers grew in that valley, great violet spikes, and little lilac clusters, and many perfumed herbs, and they filled the pleasant air with fragrance. There was space there, and freedom, and cheerful colours and gentle sounds. How different this melancholy cave with its damp and its darkness and its crushing low roof! Not a flower here, not a colour save the wet dark green overhead, and even that one would hardly see through the twilight of the rains. And chiefly, what a contrast was this ceaseless river roar to the whispering singing music of the stream on the rosy rocks!

But all was well. From strength to strength we are led as we are able to bear it, for the love of our God is brave.

And also kind; it takes everything into account. When Raj had gone up to the valley, he had only a little book of the Psalms. So another book was opened, and at a coloured picture; for though Raj had been a robber captain, he had the heart of a young child. But now Raj had books, a Testament with many underlined verses, a lyric book, and at least one hymn-book, for he was a lover of songs. He had also the Book of Proverbs, given by the grey-headed Christian whose flesh quaked as he laid his hands on the two bowed heads and prayed that Raj and Chotu might be kept from sin; and he had the *Pilgrim's Progress* with its plain vigorous speech. And he had proved his God, as he had not had time to do when that first blast of temptation shook him with its sudden onslaught. Now let the test be keener; God was making a man. All the forces of His world worked with their Creator; and so was drained from Raj the weakness of leaning upon man or woman.

Meanwhile, down in the Plains, tales of new iniquities harrowed the hearts that still held to their hope, even to the word spoken at the beginning. "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall

be a light unto me." And another word became spirit and life: "Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so we would have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up." Everywhere, during those days, people were talking of him. For the robberies were now in full flood, and kept his name before men's minds. In the trains and motors and on the roads, anyone whose ears were open heard snatches of such talk.

One afternoon an old man came to the Garden House. His face crinkled and wrinkled into new lines of pleased reminiscence as he discoursed to a group of younger men who chanced to be gathering there that day. And Carunia, wondering what the happy-sounding story was about, drew nearer and listened.

"Yes, I saw him," she heard old Wrinkles remark calmly, as if to see Raj was as simple a thing as breathing. The little company gasped with joyful astonishment and anticipation.

"Him verily?"

"Yea, verily," said the old man. "He was standing near a bush of wild guava, and I talked to him for a while. He pointed to the guava bush and said, 'O my father, the word is true. If we could live on those berries, we should be content.' And we had much happy talk together."

It was only a little story of comfort, but it was comforting.

One day it was some woodmen:

"Ay, it was wonderful to see. They were sitting at food among the trees near the charcoal-burners, and they had only plain rice with tamarind juice, very dull fare. Said one of the charcoal-burners, 'No curry? no meat curry?' for he knew that Raj liked meat curries and that there were plenty of goats about; and Raj laughed and said that no one had given him a goat that day, and no game had fallen to his gun. And he told of his promise never to rob again. And then he said, 'This tamarind juice is enough. O brother, we do not feel any lack.'"

And one day it was a little boy who had heard terrifying tales of Raj's doings, and so was greatly frightened when Raj suddenly appeared. The place was lonely, near the edge of the forest, and the poor child cried out in his fear. Raj was grieved to think the child was frightened of him, and he put his arms round him and soothed him, "and he took a handkerchief from his pocket," said the boy, "for he wore an old khaki coat with pockets; and he wiped away my tears; gently he wiped them; and he said, 'I wish very much that I had something to give thee, but I have nothing, little brother; I have nothing.'"

CHAPTER III

IT IS AN ORDER

UNWIND the wire from a violin string and as you pull it comes, as it seems, endlessly, uncurling like a hair; and you see the catgut vibrate like a living thing within that delicate coil. Pull the fine-drawn trouble of this story and still it comes, and at the heart of it there is always something tense and alive.

And now each reported crime lent a new and a steady strength to the hand that pulled the wire.

The sun was beating down on a village under the hills when Sakuni, he of the joke that did not come off, crossed the plain, with never a glance at its peaceful view of lake and encircling mountains, and found his way to the house of one of the spies engaged to track Raj. He was immediately admitted. The spy pulled a cane cot out into the shade of a verandah, and his visitor sat down.

"I cannot sleep till the villain is chopped up," remarked Sakuni—he used the verb for chopping up butcher's meat—and he discussed Raj viciously for a while, for Raj's most provoking avoidance of a carefully baited snare had infuriated him. Raj was vermin. The talk ended thus:

"When his capture is accomplished, one leg must be shot through the knee, and the tendons of the other ankle must be cut. Or if shooting cannot be, then the sinews under the knee must be cut; such injuries could easily be made to appear accidental; there will be a scuffle: it can happen in the scuffle. Then he will limp for the rest of his days, so," and Sakuni held out his hands and waggled them suggestively. "He will be a limping cripple."

The words startled a man who happened to be in the house at the time and who was forgotten as the voices rose in discussion and opprobrium. He, like most other men, had heard that this was to be done if possible; it was one of those many things which everyone knew, but which no one could say how he knew. Now this man had definitely heard it put into the words of an order: "It is an order: an order," the spy had murmured as a kind of accompaniment to the conversation. Raj, the athlete, whose chief joy from his childhood had been in feats of strength and endurance, Raj, who though partly crippled now had yet recovered so marvellously from the last brutal himsa that he could run again—Raj was to be a limping cripple for life. The training

of the man who listened had not been of the kind tending towards super-refinement, but this shocked him. He had wished that Raj would come in, till, after the false charges began, he had realised that to come in would add to the troubles his people were suffering. " For must not the band be found ? " Now he realised, as he had not before, the cause of Raj's deep distrust of justice. " I have tasted of the ways of justice, I have lost faith in justice," Raj had openly said. Was it strange that he had said so ?

This man was not the only one whose soul revolted against what was intended : " Shoot him like a dog " ; it had been said in the presence of Fides, a gallant-hearted Government servant who, being assured of Raj's honourable dealing, did not fear to speak out even in the official circles where he moved; he paid heavily for his championship ; but there was no way of proving the origin of even one of the annoyances that followed him from that time on for many months. How prove who tampered with his letters, and intercepted them if they happened to be from any place likely to be favourable to Raj ? How prove anything ? Fides, like the man who heard the giving of that tendon-cutting order, knew more than he could prove.

It has been said and will be said again that when there is himsa it is due to the excitement of the moment. " Their blood was up." But this was not always true. Was it so strange then that the assurance of the authorities that nothing of the kind should happen, and that for their own sake all concerned would be careful, fell on deaf ears ? The distant Great believed that this himsa talk was a mere excuse Raj made for staying out. But then they had never heard any talk about chopping up a live man as though he were butcher's meat.

CHAPTER IV

INSTEAD OF THE BOILING—ASHES

ABOVE the straggling streets of the town where the false friend lived who betrayed Raj, there is a mountain sheathed in forest. Deep ravines are carved between the spurs of the mountain, and there are many hidden nooks, each with its tumbling water and fresh and delicate beauty. Life, various and lovely, is everywhere. Among the gorges on that mountain, tree-ferns grow in dense masses, and by its streams you may see the spoor of many animals. It is a place to dream in, a green coolness on the hottest day. And as you wander there, the wood opens on a little grassy world, full of flowers and the singing of birds, and a sambhur may

start up almost from under your feet; you will hear his hoofs beat on the hard ground before you have realised who he is, and as you hold your breath to listen, suddenly out of the silence of the encompassing forest you will hear the cries of a myriad startled things, and above them all the "Whoo, Whoo, Whoo" of the great black grey-capped monkey whose ancestors were taken with the peacocks to King Solomon's Court.

But at night the forest can be awful. The snaky forms of the entada hang from huge trees, creepers of enormous girth and tortuous form which, half seen in the dark, can appear threatening, malevolent. There are stealthy noises then, and rustlings, and whispers. You may hear what at night, if you happen to be out in the wood, can be unpleasant, a tiger's growl.

Raj and Chotu never both slept at the same time. One would watch, sitting by the carefully shielded fire, with his gun across his knees, while the other slept; and through those long vigils Raj thought much, and his thoughts were very sorrowful, for the bitterness of the hunted was his in full measure. At such times the influence of the darkness outside the little circle of firelight, the strange sounds and movements affected him profoundly, and he would find himself brooding over his wrongs again—the broken oath, the first himsa, the wrecked home, Seetha's piteous death. In his language the word for the boiling up of emotions brings before the mind a pot set on the fire, a bubbling of the boiling liquid, an overflowing as it runs down the side of the pot into the fire. Well within reach of him was his false friend, all but within hand's grasp, as his idiom put it. He saw the little side-room where he had slept after the feast; he lived through those lurid hours again. Raj was not beyond the assault of strong temptation. He was savagely tempted.

"But I cannot understand it," he said to Gir one day, after such a watch by the fire—for the faithful Gir had found him out, and had come to talk with him—"I feel the mighty urging, I hear the very words, 'Rise up and do it, Rise up and do it'; my hand is on my gun: and yet I do not want to rise up and do it."

"He deserves to be punished," said Gir, "but it is well that thou punish him not. His fears are his punishment. He keeps indoors, not yet believing thou wilt not attack him, and he does not trust his gun alone. He is going to get a revolver." They discussed the poor wretch awhile thus—"If it were not for that which happened by the Lotus Water, and in the hospital"—and Raj told that tale again—"and if it were not for the teaching of this book"—and he held out a weather-worn Testament—

Photo by A. G. Annot

THE SPLIT ROCK

In the fissure of this rock Raj used to hide his loot. There it would lie all day and at night he would distribute his share amongst the poor and gladden their hearts. Above, among the rocks is one of his caves overlooking the road. (Page 142.)

" should I have been for five hours within reach of him without punishing him ? But now instead of the boiling I find ashes."

And Gir wondered.

CHAPTER V

THE HOLLOW AMONG THE YOUNG PALMS

And now, chased from the northern valley, he and Chotu travelled over the southern hills, seeking work and finding it sometimes ; but more often they were just hapless fugitives flying from the face of the Law that was meant to defend such as they had once been and would be again, if only they might. Law, the strong friend, when turned to be an enemy, is terrible ; how terrible must be left to the imagination of one who can put himself in the place of those two men. They could hardly ever rest secure, except when they were in the heart of some untrodden forest. They shared their food with a sadhu, one day, pitying his evident weariness. They found a week later that he was a spy ; he led the police to their cave. Except in their far retreats they were never off guard, what they took to be the sparkle of a dew-drop might be the gleam of the muzzle of a rifle held low among the leaves.

But the tender mercies of the Lord are over all His works : this word stands : in his need Raj was granted the ministry of friends. And now Marut, the herb doctor, was with him, in a hollow place, set round with young palms, where one might be for a long time without any knowing, and the school-fellows embraced in the warm Eastern way, and Raj told the story of that hour by the Lotus Water.

" And all has become new to me," he said, and the herb-doctor creased his forehead and tapped his polished shaven head in his effort to follow this strange talk. " The desires I used to have within me do not spring up now. I am myself bewildered by this, it is as if they were dead." And Marut thought of the night just before the evening of that talk by the Lotus Water, when Raj had said to him about his false friend, " Watch ; within a week thou wilt hear he hast paid for his treachery." What accounted for the change ? They spoke of that man then, and Raj said, " But afterwards I had no heart to move against him, and at last I could not help forgiving him ; for I had been forgiven."

The careful in such matters will notice how, though Raj quoted the Lord's Prayer when he first spoke of forgiving his enemies,

he always explained his being able to forgive, not by fears of being unforgiven if he did not forgive, but by the mercy of sins forgiven. And he went on to explain his simple creed to Marut, who was exceedingly bewildered, and chiefly by its simplicity.

For Marut was a thinker. He could have talked for hours on most complex things: whirlpools into which souls were sucked, and how and why; and the only Self, with which, when the body falls away, the enlightened and emancipated become identified; and a form of "meditation without subject or object, whose consummation is when thought exists without an object, and is not an object to itself."

He could have discoursed on killing that is not killing: "He whose intellect is not confused, even though he should kill, kills not"; for everything after all is mere illusion. Therefore had Raj killed his foes, as he may once have intended to do—but no thought should be pressed too far. Marut could have argued about ropes of sand, and reflections of moons in different vessels of water, and many several streams proceeding from one fountain, and many different roads leading to one city. And yet here he was baffled by this simple unfathomable thing, that change of heart that makes a man forgive his enemies.

He begged Raj to explain further, but Raj was never eloquent. He told of the Lotus Water in the sunset, of bread and tea, of a story that he could not forget, and he told Marut the story of the three crosses, "and on the middle cross was the Innocent One between two robbers." Marut listened affectionately, but it did not occur to him that it bore upon his own life. It was only "a new doctrine." And he opened an argument to which Raj also listened affectionately, but which he did not in the least understand, for he had never been philosophical like Marut. At last he said in his blundering way, "This that thou sayest is fog to me; all I know is that the things I used to do, now I do not desire to do: something has happened to me that has changed my desires."

And Marut had to be content with that.

"But I was as a frog in a lotus flower," Marut said a year or so afterwards. "The bee perceives the honey; I was not a bee, I was a frog." And when he held in his hands the little worn leather-covered Bible that Raj had kept under his pillow in the jail, and found written on one of its pages these words in Raj's writing, "O Lord, O King, redeem me," he knew that it was not a question of a doctrine, but of a person: "It is I."

"At what date was this talk?" asked Carunia of Marut when he told his tale. But Marut, who could remember every twist

and turn of his verbal wrestle with Raj, was vague about the date, till at last, with his two fingers pressed on his forehead to assist its recovery, he exclaimed, "It was on the evening of the day that the brave young girl was robbed of her jewels by the cutting of her ears." And that minute corroboration of something heard otherwise was a nugget of gold.

For on that day the servants had brought the market talk to the Garden House. "Say it was the Red Tiger's doing," said they.

"I will not say it," said the girl.

"But it was his, say so," said they again.

"I will say that the man who snatched at my ears and cut them said he was Red Tiger, but I will not say that he was the Red Tiger, for I do not know," was the girl's reply, and her courage was the admiration of the market.

Followed the back and forward chatter of the crowd:

"It is not his doing."

"It is."

"He is robbing: They say so. Their records are full of his crimes."

"He may be robbing. But when did the Red Tiger cut a woman's ears?"

"Thou art right. There is not the smell of him in this." The story ended in the girl's going to the hospital where her ears were sewn up. And as this detail was being discussed, a bystander said quietly, "This was not the Red Tiger's work. He would not do such a thing, and on that day he was nowhere near the road."

"Where was he then?" the servants had asked quickly. And the place named was the Hollow of the Young Palms.

CHAPTER VI

"AN EAR OPEN TO US"

MARUT had much to lose. He was well-off, and engaged to a rich girl. Among his possessions was a little shrine; many and close ties bound him to his own religion. He was drawn by what Raj had said about the change in his desires, but, "I will never forsake my own for another," he said to himself, and he pushed the thought away.

Still, he was baffled: and the most baffling thing was Raj's peace in times of shortage. Marut knew there were such times. Sometimes it was impossible to get food up. This was inevitable.

In the curious conditions then prevailing it was right. And yet it was pitiful too. Raj moved from British India, crossing the mountains where he could, and under difficulties which again were right, and had to be—what a tangle it all was—and these excursions could not always be foretold, or the messenger was intercepted, and food ran short.

The messenger at this time was Druti, the lad who had been one of Raj's band, and who had insisted upon joining him again so that he might bring up provisions. A warrant of arrest had been served upon Druti which he had easily evaded till now. He had forsaken his bad ways, because Raj told him they were wrong, and he loved him enough to obey him ; but of course the warrant still held ; and every time he went down for food he was all but walking into jail. For it was known to the police that he was with Raj and Chotu at that time ; and in the faked dacoities of the period, and long after he had left the men, he always figured ; " he of the paralysed arm," he was called, for one arm was useless.

His end was tragic. Raj had told him to go home and marry, and had given him what he could of his own little store, and the boy had gone. After Raj's death he came back to the British side of the hills to see a relative, and the police were informed and proceeded to arrest him. Thereupon—this was the first tale sent running through the town—he ended his life with his pruning-hook, fearing himsa ; the second said that he was about to escape when he was felled by the butt-end of a gun, and that the pruning-hook was used to make it appear suicide. Whichever tale was true, Druti was buried at once. There is no stupid delay about such matters in India.

But faithful as the boy was, food often ran short. " And even so, we are learning to be in peace," Raj had said quietly, and Marut was staggered at this ; for only an ascetic learns this lesson, and Raj was no ascetic, but a jovial, hearty, ordinary man ; more sinew than soul, Marut would have said if he had been pressed to describe him.

Then Raj had told of amazing things, of a cry that reached a living ear, " I speak, God listens. He bends down His ear and listens."

And he had told, but not in detail, for not even to Marut would he give away another's secret, of help that had spoken to him of a Father's care on a day of distress when both he and Chotu were tempted to end their lives because of the heaping up of crimes against them, and because of their hunger. But Raj had cried, and in that moment of their extremity a message had been

sent to him : " At such and such a house is one who trusts thee and will help thee." And carefully in the moonless half of the night, he and Chotu had gone to that house and found every luxury awaiting them, an oil-bath, that soaking comfort which renews the dried-up skin ; and rich cakes made with butter and honey ; for they were thin and worn, and their host had any number of willing women at his command.

They had been nourished there for several days ; and when they left, servants had been sent to carry basket loads of food to their cave ; so that for a week or two they had no lack.

There were hundreds of rich men in the hundreds of towns and villages on both sides of the mountains. It may be that the rich man ran little risk ; but again, any moment he might have been in trouble. Another who did the same had to pay several hundred rupees blackmail to escape a charge of harbouring the outlaws.

" Yes, verily our Father has an ear open unto us," Raj had said to Marut, and he had tried to show him the sap of the thing, as he would have put it, though the sap of things is not easily shown. But he did make one thing plain : prayer was not a beating of the air with words, as they had thought from the far back beginning. For example, that forty thousand times repetition of a name was vanity. Prayer was a speaking into an ear that was open to listen, bent down to listen. " It is all here," Raj had said, touching his book. " This is a vital book."

Vital indeed is that book to the man to whom life is more than a painted show, thrice vital to Raj in his desperate circumstances. The blossom of the wicked does not always or at once go up as dust. The men that justify the wicked for reward and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him are often as trees with their roots in the water. So the words in his book spoke in a tongue that Raj could understand : " My soul is among lions, and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. They have prepared a net for my steps, my soul is bowed down, they have digged a pit before me—I will cry unto God most high."

" But however things be," Raj had concluded, as they talked together in the Hollow of Young Palms, " He gives us peace, even when we are hungry He gives us peace." And to Marut it was all a mystery. He could neither deny, nor explain what he had seen. For how could a story account for such a change ? It could not account for it. Could a doctrine act so mightily ? Marut knew that it could not. There must be something more.

What was that something more? Who listened when Raj cried? God? But the Being-who-pervades-all-space (a fine Indian name for God) was surely too great, and most certainly too vague a conception to be thought of as deigning to attend to a poor man's cry. And the world was full of cries and of great and clamorous noise; the very forest was not quiet here by the rushing river.

Not that Marut consciously arrived at this. The workings of his mind were confused, and his thoughts afloat in a perplexed air were blown about hither and thither.

Far then from him was a truth that he came upon at last, that not a bird in the forest falls unnoticed by the Father, nor is child of His caused to stumble, but He regards it. And far, far from him then, the faith that can see a poor bird fall, and hear a child cry unsuccoured, and yet know that somewhere, somehow, bird and child will be comforted.

CHAPTER VII

AND I SAID, "YES, LORD"

An Indian bazaar, viewed as a place of talk, is like a pool into which pebbles are continually being thrown. The waves race across it, criss-crossing one another, making an intricate changeful pattern of manifold interferences.

No one could tell exactly how he first knew that something extraordinary was happening in the forest. The messengers who took up the ammunition may have thrown the first few pebbles, for the story was too good to keep. Soon all men knew that a heavy packet of ammunition had been sent up, and that Raj had been pressed to come down and rob. They knew that he had been told of various police officers' visits to the Garden House (proving, of course, that his friend and they were working together for his destruction); knew that he had been invited to consider the fact that each time he had tried to come in he had been all but caught, and, as he was unfailingly reminded, maimed for life; knew that he had refused to believe that she would betray him, but did believe she had forsaken him (the story which could only have proceeded from official sources, about her believing he had come down to rob on the night of the fired house and writing to that effect to their chief, had cut Raj to the quick). And they knew of the urgings to have done with this fruitless goodness, which led nowhere; knew of his refusal. At last the weasel-eyed man himself confessed what he had done, told of

Raj's resolve which nothing could shake, and gave Per the clue to the valley where the men were.

Then up through the wood went Per on winged feet, and he found them. Per is not emotional, but he could never speak unmoved of that meeting.

They were in a cave by a broad stream. They rose to meet him and searched his face with eager longing and love and joy in their eyes. That one look was enough. There was no need for assuring words. Then sitting on a boulder beside the water that sparkled that day in the sunshine, "like diamonds," said Per afterwards, "like diamonds dancing for joy with us," they talked earnestly, and Per heard of the weeks that had passed; of the sadhu's cave; of the ammunition sent up ("Here is what is left of it," and Raj pointed to a goodly store heaped in a corner of the cave); of the tremendous temptation of the days when they thought themselves forsaken; of the comfort that came at last. And Per found Raj had grown spiritually and was learning to rely upon the living God.

But it is difficult to write about this without giving an exaggerated impression. Raj had not a public-school tradition behind him, nor had he the Christian tradition that toned Per's view of life in general, and this contemplated act of surrender in particular; and he argued as the East argues upon grounds that do not appeal to the West. For example, he had honestly tried to come in without being intercepted. He had failed. Why? To Raj the answer was obvious. "There's a divinity that shapes our ends" is not mere poetry in the East. It is accepted fact. Raj could see nothing beyond. He was blind if you will, he was certainly imperfectly enlightened. But so long as he was not disobedient to the light he had, he walked with an unclouded conscience. Nothing had happened to encourage him to trust the Law. He had good reason to distrust it. Each false charge deepened his distrust.

But he broke off that momentous talk to invite Per to share their noontide meal. Per, knowing the scarcity of their supplies, would not hear of it; but Raj rose, got a plate made of leaves stitched together with a fibre from a jungle plant, and bade Chotu pile the rice upon it, "else we shall not dine," he said. So they had their meal together. Per described that meal set out on the stones of the river with the water flowing over amber pebbles, "clear like yellow wine." On either side were the great green trees of the wood, and there was the sound of birds singing, and the rustle of their wings as they flew to and fro across the stream. The men whom Per had grown to love as sons laughed and joked

over that meal, tossing their sad thoughts aside, as they tossed withered leaves in idle play into the river. But the river that tumbled those leaves about, sweeping them round in merry little eddies, till a fuller rush of water carried them out of sight, could not do that with thoughts, and presently to comfort them. Per gave Raj the letter which he had brought up, and had kept as his last word for their last afternoon together. He knew it might be his last, and Raj knew it too, indeed urged that it might be so. They could bear to be without seeing him any more, Raj said, now that they knew he had not lost faith in them. And if he came he might be followed and shot. It did not matter about them; they were mere jungle animals; but he was a man of value. "Do not come again," Raj said earnestly again and again. "We shall never doubt again or fear, even if we may never meet." This touched Per, but he did not argue the point, only watched with a new understanding the ways of the hunted man. And Raj took Carunia's letter and, lifting it up with a little gesture of almost worship in his gratitude, "he kissed it with his eyes," as Per said afterwards, and read it and reread it. Never once had he asked for money. But he had asked for letters. "Tear it up," said Per after Raj had read their letter till he knew it off by heart, "tear it up; if it be found, it will bring trouble."

"Nay, never," said Raj reproachfully. "I cannot tear it up. But I will put it under a stone, and then when we come back to this cave we shall find it and read it again."

There must be many such letters under the stones of the caves. If those stones are ever overturned and the letters found, may they help to hearten some downcast man.

"See how bright the water sparkles," said Raj as he folded his letter carefully. "Oh, the sparkling water!" and for one more hour they sat with Per and heard how down in the Garden House, night by night as well as day by day, and especially during moonless hours (for it is then half the crimes of India are committed), there was prayer for them, and they were trusted. Their friends had not lost faith.

"But during that gloomy time we sinned," Raj jerked out the words after a short silence.

Per was startled and listened anxiously. Had they fallen after all? His fatherly face with its kind eyes must have encouraged their confession. Raj continued, ashamed but frank as ever—"We heard that one whom we had counted friend had lent his gun to the police to shoot us, and we went to his house, and demanded it in order to prove him and to see if indeed he had lent it. And we found that he had."

Then, with a gleam of the old humour, Raj described how he made the man give up his box of land-deeds and other valuables. "Some of his precious things we threw back to him, so"—a contemptuous gesture showed it—"the box we carried off. But we returned it later, laying it near the well for him to find; and on it we fastened a mocking letter to say that he who would have slain us must now provide something to keep us alive. But, indeed, we were very greatly disheartened, and did all but despair," and Chotu told how Raj had exclaimed in desperation, "Would God that we could die!" And they were so discouraged that they grew careless in prayer "till about a month ago. Then a quickening came, and we prayed again."

"About a month ago?" When Per returned to the Garden House, dates and notes were eagerly examined, and it was found that, just when the men were quickened, a fresh prayer force had joined the van of the scattered little army of the Lord that had been called to this long conflict.

Then they wrote their letters in reply to Carunia's. They had a pen and a small bottle of ink and a little shabby paper. A flat stone made a writing table.

"Our spiritual mother must know that morning, noon, and evening we make it our custom to pray. And are we not being protected by the power of prayer? The Lord says, 'Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' To us according to that word may it be now. With our whole hearts we write"; thus Chotu.

And Raj: "We are both well. We are going on living without robbing or stealing. That we rob is the talk of the villages and the report of the police. They write us down in their reports as robbing. This is bitterness to us. As you cared for us before, so we ask you still to care for us. Till we give our spirits over to God, care for us.

"And we ask you to care for the Village of the Reeds" (where their people were turning to the Lord Jesus Christ). "We long to see and speak with you. Wherever you appoint, we will meet you." (But that could not rightly be planned without leave.) "We will do no robbery. This is my signature." And he signed his baptismal name.

A postscript named a certain officer, "who sent many thieves up to us, saying, 'Come with us and rob.' When we inquired into the matter, we found men were robbing, and those robberies are in the records against us. So till now things have happened, and so they do still happen. Moreover, that officer, getting a box of caps and a box of gunpowder, gave them to the

above-mentioned robbers, saying, 'Give these to them.' And they came and gave them to us, and we said, 'Why this?' And one trusting us, told the truth, and we believed. When I think of you I am happy. At other times I am full of care."

"We make it our custom to pray"; here again a word is required if the Western reader is not to think more highly than he ought to think of these two who were still so immature. The East begins (where the West ends) with a consciousness of the Divine, a sense of the need of access and a great simplicity in seeking it. And these men who at any moment might find themselves where "without a screen, in one burst is seen the Presence wherein we have ever been," did in truth know the tremendous need of Prayer.

Per, as he gave Carunia the notes, said little, but his face was tender and his voice tender too. "Poor men, called so wicked, so fierce, that the hunters with guns fear to meet them. And I know them to be as gentle as two children."

"And their confession was the confession of two children," he went on, "it explained that matter that was dark to us a little while ago." For when the land documents were taken from a house near the Garden Village, the story had been entangled with a tale of a genuine robbery. How disentangle the tales? When the box was returned, as has been told, the owner, recognizing the joke, had the good sense and the honesty to wish to withdraw his charge. But it was too late. It figured as another of the daring robberies of this most elusive Raj.

A day or two later Per came to Carunia again, and now his face had indeed a holy light.

"A thing has been shown to me," he said. "Last night my Lord appeared to me, and He said, 'Are you willing to give your life for the men?'

"And I said, 'Yes, Lord.'

"Then I was quiet, and no more words did He speak; but I knew I was to go and try to stay with the men in the forest and open to them more than they know yet of the love of the Lord Jesus."

And then he told Carunia of how he knew of their longing to be taught more, and of how they had pleaded again that she would teach them, before she asked them to give themselves up, lest they should fall and dishonour His name again; and of how that could not be. But now he must try to do it, he said; sharing their risks he must live with them, if possible, out in the forest, daily teaching them and strengthening them. And he said, "If once they saw the piercing of those hands and of those feet, if

they saw the crown of thorns on that head, would anything matter to them? Oh, they would endure, if only they looked for one long look at Calvary."

Jail, with what the word must mean now that their escape must double its severities, the ignominies, those heartrending yearnings for the free forest and the running water, the separation the one from the other, the public trial in the Court (with friends forbidden to come forward to prove an alibi), the sentence—Yes, it was true, they could endure it all, but only if they so saw Calvary as never to lose the vision of that suffering and that love.

From the first Carunia had played a straight game with Authority as much as with the hunted men. She had told the hunters of that sending of rugs to help the men to get through the rain to a place where they would be led to come in. She told now of this resolve that Per had made, so that should he be shot, as he might be if he were found with the men, Authority at least would understand that he too had played the game.

So Per started forth upon his mission. The forest opened to receive him. Then it closed, and a great silence fell.

PART VIII

O God, wert Thou ploughing
Thy profitless earth
With the brave plough of Love,
And the sharp plough of Pain?
But hark to the mirth
Of wheat-field in harvest!
Dear Plougher, well worth
That ploughing, this yellow gold grain.

THE VALLEY OF VISION.

I see that the Lord can ride through His enemies' bands, and triumph in the sufferings of His own; and that this blind world seeth not that sufferings are Christ's armour, wherein He is victorious. And they who contend with Zion see not what He is doing, when they are set to work, as under-smiths and servants to the work of refining the saints. Satan's hand also, by them, is at the melting of the Lord's vessels of mercy, and their office in God's house is to scour and cleanse vessels for the King's table.

SAMUEL RUTHERFORD,
1637.

CHAPTER I

THE POOLS WERE FILLED WITH WATER

AMONG the villages under the mountains where Raj's people lived was one, quite a little one, but a fort. No one was allowed to be a Christian in the Village of the Reeds. Preaching was forbidden there; the more persuasive teaching was of course forbidden too. The people feared intensely their powerful over-lord, who had given orders that no one, in what he called his village, should become a Christian. Fear kept their village closed.

But some fifty years before this story begins, a man of God went to the mountain-foot villages, and, being refused admission, grieved exceedingly. He prayed for the over-lord, father of the man who now ruled there. Kneeling by the ashes of a prayer room which the over-lord had burned down, he prayed for the oppressor, "O that he might live before Thee! But if he will not turn to Thee, O Lord, break his power to oppress." And a swift answer came to that prayer. The over-lord refused the call of love, and the Lord touched him, even as long ago He touched the King of Babylon; his understanding was darkened. And

though it is not known that he ever made the great confession of that king, it is known that to some of the mountain-foot villages there was the dawning of the light, and that his power to forbid failed him at the last. But the Village of the Reeds was not one of the lighted places.

Then the old man died and his son reigned in his stead, and (for he was even as his father had been) it was as if that prayer of long ago had been forgotten.

Prayer is never forgotten. If this book carries one word more than another it is this :

" The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie ; though it tarry, *wait for it ;* because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

But not always by shining ways does that vision break on man. Who would have seen in the little closed-up room in the Village of the Reeds the beginning of the revelation of joy ?

It was midnight then in that little room ; three serious-faced men were there. On a box on the floor lay a sheet of foolscap covered with careful writing ; a man was writing with a fine-pointed pen, which he dipped between every two or three words into a small inkpot, and then shook out on the beaten earth floor. An anxious old man and an anxious old woman hovered near. The room was lighted by the yellow flame of a morsel of twisted rag in a saucer of oil. The flame burned steadily, for every window in the little house was shut, and the door was jammed to and bolted. The men spoke in undertones at first, till they forgot that darkness itself has ears, and let their voices out as they pondered earnestly over each word and phrase. At last the equivalent of " And your petitioners will ever pray," being rendered copiously, they all three signed the letter and folded it up in another sheet of foolscap, gumming down the edges with a pickle of soft-boiled rice.

" Our own post office would not be safe." (Some forty such letters posted in that office in one week had failed, so far as their senders knew, to reach their destination.) " To-morrow I will post it half a day's journey distant," said the son of the house, a young schoolmaster, who had acted as scribe. " It will be safe here for to-night." And he found a dinted tin cash-box and locked up the precious letter, and hid the box under a nondescript heap in a corner of the little room.

Then the heavy door was opened, and the other two went to their own homes, trusting that no one had seen. They forgot the spy who lived close by. They forgot the aperture between the wall and the palm-leaf roof.

The three men were Studi, a quiet man and fond of his comforts, but with a valorous vein running through his softness; Satya, a young worker on the mountains, strong, plucky, resolute, who had been in the house in the forest when Undu came to drug Raj; and the schoolmaster, a wisp of a man, with no stamina to speak of, but like the other two, ardent in spirit. They all wore the half-moon shaven head with its tucked-up back hair that marks the orthodox Hindu. They had been writing a letter to Authority to beg that the blackmail which was draining the little villages might cease, and also to tell of the himsa in more violent forms, threatened and sometimes performed. The petition was an earnest prayer for protection.

. . . . . .

"My son, listen! Alas! What is that?" It was morning now. The school children were crooning their lessons on the verandah, a pile of small silver, their week's fees, lay heaped up in a corner. The children's sing-song recitations had drowned the sound of footsteps approaching the house. A spasm of fear crossed the old man's face. "O my son, my son, the *polees!*"

In a moment the children had scattered, the house was full of men ransacking every hole and cranny. The box was found, wrenched open, and the letter held up: "Here it is! Thou to inform against US!" The finder read it aloud, shouted it word by word, interrupted often by an indignant clamour.

When the dazed old father recovered his senses, his house was quiet and empty. Gone was his son, and the letter, and the small pile of children's fees, and the money stored in the tin cash-box. He stumbled out, only to see his son being thrashed with a tamarind bough, while rough voices shouted, "Thou to inform against US."

The schoolmaster was dragged off, handcuffed, and charged with harbouring Raj and Chotu. His parents followed, hoping to bail him out; but they soon lost sight of him. He was taken from place to place till he had been in six sub-jails, and emerged after twenty-four days half wrecked in health. He could have escaped it all had he only yielded in so far as to say that he had heard that Raj had killed Undu.

Meanwhile, in the hope of getting evidence, the old man who had been in the forest on the night when Undu came up with the drug, was seized, and told to say that Raj had murdered Undu. But he held out against blows, merely wailing, "I cannot say it. I cannot say it. Am I not a father of seven children?" (He had probably forgotten the number of his grandchildren.)

" How can I lie now ? " And nothing more than this could be got out of him, except that to any who would listen he added, " And I saw Red Tiger with his book upon his knees, and he said " —and the plaintive quaver would attempt Raj's decisive bass— " but for the teaching of this book," and so on, Raj's usual clear-cut little testimony on that subject.

Satya was the next to be hailed. But it is far from our thought to dwell upon the painful and the wrong. There is nothing eternal in wrong and pain ; they are not worth a pause. And yet just enough must be shown to give the setting of the song that was soon to rise from those frightened little streets. Satya was told to say that he knew of the murder of Undu, or that he knew that Studi had something to do with it, had, for example, written to Raj suggesting it ; and because he refused, there was himsa.

All this happened in such a little village that hardly anyone outside that corner of India had ever heard its name. But nothing is little to God, and nothing baffles Him, He can turn even himsa to sweetness. And it was through that himsa that His purposes were fulfilled for the Village of the Reeds, and the prayers that had seemed to be blown away on the wind that blows from the hills were answered.

For the anxious and terrified men and their friends fled to the Garden House and begged for protection, which, indeed, could not be given, though shelter and comfort could. They worked for their food, and daily they gathered under a tree, and were taught the way of liberty from fear.

Then a warrant was served on Satya. He faced it gamely, though he knew it spelt ruin so far as his poor little finances were concerned. Win or lose, a police case means very heavy expense. To win does not mean that costs will be paid as when the prosecutors are ordinary people. When the Sirkar prosecutes, you stand to lose heavily, innocent or guilty. If you are innocent, or rather if you can prove yourself inuocent, a very different matter, you will not be fined or put in jail, but you must pay costs yourself. The group of six or seven men in the sketchy undress of the land, but undeniably constables, of whom one carried a gun, came to arrest Satya, and he looked them one by one straight in the face. " That is the man who flogged me with a tamarind bough to make me bear false witness," he said finally, pointing to a man who slunk behind the others, for English people were there ; and then addressing him, " You flogged me, an innocent man ; was that according to the law of the Sirkar ? "

Satya passed through the same experience as his forerunner,

the schoolmaster. He walked the roads in handcuffs, he was locked up in six sub-jails, and it was a very weary man who was at last released on bail.

Then came Studi's turn. Studi was so very mild, such a virtuous white rabbit kind of man, that the idea of his doing anything criminal struck everyone who knew him as too ridiculous to be taken seriously. He had not got it in him; prison, fines, indignities were the last things he coveted. And yet he rose superior to fear when his hour came. When the warrant was served on him he was very ill; but even so he was dragged off, and was being pulled along the path more dead than alive when a woman half-demented with distress rushed to the Garden House. "Save him, save him! He will die this night if they take him." But he could not have been saved had it not been for the presence of a Government doctor who chanced to be paying a visit to the house, and who promptly wrote a medical certificate and forbade the men to touch him. They were much alarmed for their own safety. "If we take this to our master, what will he say?" they said, holding up the letter more than dubiously. "Are we not his slaves?"

"You are not his slaves, you are the servants of the King," they were told; but the King was far away, and their "master" was very near; so this was poor comfort.

Studi collapsed after they went. He was in the greatest anxiety about the crime with which he was charged—was it harbouring, or was it complicity in a murder? The warrant of arrest was illegible, the police could only repeat a number which meant nothing to him; and as the Garden House did not then possess a copy of the Indian Penal Code, it was equally unintelligible to his friends.

"If it be murder, what shall I do?" muttered poor Studi to himself, as he lay in a huddled hot heap on his mat. "And if it be harbouring, what shall I do? Either way it will be a money-eating trial in the Court."

But as the days passed, Studi became strong; for Christ, the strong Saviour, found him and strengthened him with strength in his soul. Then what had appeared impossible became possible. When that which he had dreaded came upon him, he went forward to meet it undismayed, and passing through the valley of weeping he used it for a well, and the pools were filled with water.

CHAPTER II

JUST ONE DAY APART

O lift your heads, ye sorrowing ones,
And be ye glad of heart;
For Calvary Day and Easter Day,
Earth's saddest day and gladdest day,
Were just one day apart.

It is a true word, and Easter joy runs through this story like a golden thread in a dark tissue. One evening soon after Studi's arrest, in the hope that a visit might be allowed, a Ford car found its way to the police station where Studi and Satya were confined. But no, "There is not to be permission given for anyone to go near the door," said the six burly constables who stood about on the verandah, and they pointed to the grating opening off that verandah. It was too dark to see more than bars against the dark.

"May we speak to them, standing here?"

"No one may speak to them. It is an order."

A little girl had come in the Ford for a birthday treat. "May this little one sing to you?"

Even the hardest nodded his head indulgently. The child stood among them, a little birthday wreath, half blown off, upon her hair, her happy brown eyes smiling on the strange rough men, "a new kind of men," she called them afterwards. And she sang the last hymn she had learned, for it was Holy Week:

When I survey the wondrous Cross
On which the Prince of glory died—

She sang it to the end, and from the darkness behind the grating broke the sound of singing:

Lover of souls, Lover of souls,
What should I do without Thee?

"Be silent, sing not, breathe not!" shouted the guards. For a moment the song persisted, then stopped. But the Ford returned rejoicing. He who was taken from prison and from judgment was with His men in their prison.

It was so, perpetually: such a darkness, a barred-in darkness, only poor sin-hardened faces round about, only hearts sin-hardened too, made cruel, it may be, by cruelty—to know all would be to pity rather than to condemn. And yet, out of the darkness, a song.

Surely something will live from those days. As Studi and Satya were being led off, after they had been bailed out and were summoned for their second trial, just as they reached the high road where the shame of handcuffs would be most keenly felt, the officer in charge whispered, "Fifty rupees and there need be no handcuffs." To which, with a flash of heavenly insight, Studi answered, "These iron bangles are golden bracelets to us." And they stretched out their hands.

CHAPTER III

ALAS! FOR THE JOKE IT WOULD HAVE BEEN

It was the day of one of the hearings in Court. Studi, accused of harbouring the outlaws, was still too weak to stand the jolting in the bullock-cart for long hot hours, and so was being taken to Court in the Ford. This, though only newly acquired, was already well known throughout the district by its red flag upon which words of salvation were so clearly written that people could read them as it passed.

Up in the forest, news that Studi was to be tried that day and would be taken in the car, had filled the two, so nearly concerned, with mingled feelings of distress and grateful affection. For kindness shown to friends of theirs was kindness shown to them. Studi was a friend of old days. And they had heard that their chief oppressors were going by public motor to gloat over the troubles of the innocent.

"Let us go down and give them the fright of their sinful lives," said Raj.

"Hurrah!" said Chotu, or words to that effect.

So down they went to the road. It was the maddest kind of madness, hardly matched by one perpetrated soon afterwards when in blazing sunshine they marched with their guns over their shoulders through a certain well-policed town. For to stop a public motor on the road and pull out one or two of its occupants would be distinctly exciting. But the road, with its great heaped rocks and wild country adjoining, was the very place for such an adventure. So they went down and waited.

Presently the little Ford with its flag flapping in the wind went scudding past. It was all they could do not to run out then and stop that car; but they restrained themselves.

And now the more ponderous public motor-bus hurried into sight; but the keen eyes that searched the men on the narrow seats under the awning were disappointed. The bus was full.

They were all but sure they saw the gross, gorged, vulture-like figure of their chief enemy crouching low among the other passengers, but could not be certain enough to move, and they looked at the hunched-up shoulders with anything but devotion as the motor bustled past. "They have guessed we would do it. The pity of it! Alas for the joke it would have been!" And they turned and went up the hill.

What a tale for the newspapers, had they carried it off! What head-lines—the very motors on the road attacked! What thrills lost to the greedy world!

But speaking seriously, it was just as well that the joke did not come off. It might have led to something far removed from laughter.

CHAPTER IV

CHECKMATE

"No, no: they would not have hurt them. They would only have shaken them till their teeth danced. It would have done them no harm. It might have done them good." So everyone who knew Raj's nature declared. "For he is incapable of hurting anything that is in his power. Chotu and Vina used to twit him about it; so did all his men. He would be kind to the devil if he had the chance."

Raj was not the only disappointed man that day. Studi had been strung up to the ordeal, and had looked for victory by miracle, and to find the Court-house empty and no one to explain why, was disconcerting. At last a Court servant was unearthed who said, "Postponed," and with that he had to be content. There were several postponements. It is no slight thing to a man who lives far from a Court to gather up his witnesses and friends—for friends go to encourage the alarmed witnesses, if indeed the man has been fortunate enough to secure witnesses at all—convey them to the Court, see to their being supplied with food, make sure of being on the spot hours before the time, so as to be sure not to be late, and to carry through all a brave heart in a sick body; but this is what Studi had to do, and frequently, especially during the Court proceedings of later months. Once not even a servant could be found to explain why the Court-house was shut up; but at last some kind of a message reached the perplexed party. It was to the effect that the police, anxious for the safety of their witnesses, could not produce them while Raj was at large.

These superfluous penalties could have been avoided by notice given beforehand; but, whether given or not, it never reached the men concerned; so the whole party would trudge back, or drag slowly through the long day and half a night in bullock-carts; and Studi and his fellow-sufferers were of course responsible, not only for the lawyer's fees for that lost day, but for the losses incurred by their witnesses and sympathisers, who could not otherwise afford to leave their work. Such expenses pile up and tell heavily on men who have little ready money.

"If I had paid the blackmail asked at the beginning to escape it all, it would not have come to half this loss," said Studi one day, much tempted. But he did not pay; he lost his kingdom: he kept his soul.

One day a private message reached Carunia. "The police witnesses are coming to see if Studi will offer more than they have been promised. If you happen to be in the room when they come, you will know what we have said is true." (For Carunia, in spite of doubts, had tried to support Law, for the sake of example, and this had sometimes rather chilled the poor men.) She decided it would be worth while to happen to be in the room.

The room was part of the front verandah of the house, walled in so as to make a small side-room. In that room, while Studi was still too ill to be moved, he and his Hindu guard had read the Gospels day after day, for his guard, by the special kindness of God, was friendly and interested in his prisoner. Often the picture the two made, as they read together, recalled a more illustrious prisoner and his guard. Friends came freely, and soon after Carunia went there half a dozen men sauntered in and sat down on the floor round the low cot on which Studi lay. The talk was general for a while. Carunia was busy about something, and no one was thinking about her. Presently up went a hairy arm: "A free gun licence was promised"; and another said, "and twenty-five rupees." Studi answered quietly, "I offer nothing." "Nothing?" The tone was surprised; and the talk drifted back to ordinary channels.

The hairy-armed, shaggy-headed man who had spoken first returned a few days afterwards, and before various people, one of them an Englishman, without the least reserve he talked of his bribe. He was a devil-may-care sort of fellow, and saw no particular reason for not telling. With him was a younger man. His directions were to worm himself into the confidence of the Garden House, by listening to the preaching. He could even be converted if that would help.

He was an interesting youth. His wrist had been broken in himsa, and when he had prepared to appeal to Authority ("I have the duplicate of my appeal safe to this day," he said) he was offered twenty-five rupees to be quiet. So when he went to the hospital to be mended, he said his accident was the result of a fall. After this, he felt that on the side of the Law there was power, power of two kinds ; and he enlisted as a spy.

He was a good spy ; he did his best to obey instructions and become a faithful convert. But he found it too difficult. Something in the air of the place caught at his throat and stifled the glib words that rose to his tongue. After a day or two he gave it up.

There was another, Form of Deception was the meaning of his name—his parents must have had singular prescience—whose difficulty was that he did not know whom to deceive, the police or the Garden House. On the one hand, the favour of the police was of great importance to him. He hardly knew how to risk the loss of it. On the other hand, it was evident that the Garden House intended to stand by Studi ; surely therefore they could be counted upon to treat very generously with a poor man who could so materially help or hinder. Full of hope, therefore, Form of Deception came to that house with his fair proposal, and full of sadness he went away.

Full, too, of perplexity was that poor man. The ways of white people were mystery and madness. Here they were getting themselves into the black books of the powers that be, by standing openly by Studi, and they did not seem in the least concerned about their reputation. They would risk all that, and yet they would not pay one little silver coin to help Studi to win his case. They even said they were standing by him because he had refused to do that very thing himself. . . . "What a world it is," said Form of Deception to himself. "What a queer world, and full of queer people," but the queerest were these white people in the Garden House.

He nursed, however, a small private hope. That house had connections in his village and the mad folk of the Garden House were constantly there. So he waited patiently for a suitable opportunity and, beguiling the obdurate one into friendly conversation, he put his case before her again. But to his vexation she did not seem to understand, and asked him to forsake the ways of lying and all other works of darkness and let the light that was even then streaming down the village street enter into his heart and cleanse it from every evil thing.

Form of Deception meditated awhile, his screwed-up eyes

drawn into two narrow slits, his crinkled old mouth pursed up; he was thinking, "I can tell the *polees* that she tried to get me to promise not to say what they order; they will call that 'interfering with the course of Justice.' I may be able to make something out of this." At last he spoke, "A free gun licence and twenty-five rupees?" It was a kind of tentative murmur, and it was his last bid. It fell flat. Poor old Form of Deception, he sold his soul for a free gun licence and twenty-five rupees.

Through the prolonged weariness of this first trial there was one great human consolation apart from the Divine. In a land where everything is known, a man's price, if he has one, is known; if a magistrate is incorruptible, that fact is, of course, known at once. And all that may happen to perplex the judgment is known. While Studi's case was going on, a trial by jury was being held in another Court. The jurymen took bribes from both sides, but honestly returned the amount advanced by the lower bidders, who, of course, lost their case, and went to jail for three years. Studi and his friends felt that they had cause for thankfulness; first, because of their judge: "We hear that, being of the Sirkar, he is convinced that our whole caste is guilty. We are keeping Raj out, they say. But he will not take bribes. There will be a fair trial." And secondly, because there would be no jury. For a jury in India does not connote what the word does in England. Caste may operate powerfully, the jurymen are not necessarily of the caste of the accused. And a majority of one may wreck a man's life. In a trial which followed upon Raj's death, the sentence pronounced on the finding of a majority of one aggregated thirty-six years' rigorous imprisonment. No one who knows India will say that the jewel of truth is easily found anywhere, but the experienced Judge will be the first to admit that it is not as yet conspicuously evident in her law-courts. And the Judge has to act upon evidence produced. How it came to be produced is not his business.

But what a handicap truth-telling can be. Only those who have tried to prove in Court that something "seen" did not happen at all, can imagine how impossible it can be to do so. Nothing less than an alibi is much use, and that was impossible without lying, as all three men had been in the village on the night they were "seen" entertaining Raj and Chotu.

And yet, though the evidence against them was prepared with skill, there was one slight slip. It was stated that the spies, looking through a crack in the front door of the schoolmaster's house on a certain night, saw Studi, Satya and the schoolmaster feasting the outlaws whose very guns were seen.

But, about the middle of things, some from the Garden House went off on their own account, and they found the door was a new one and had no crack between its substantial planks, nor was there the least opening between it and its side-posts and lintel. They planned to bring that door to Court. But, carefully as they had gone about the business of examining the door, their action had been observed and understood. The door mysteriously disappeared. Checkmate, without a doubt.

CHAPTER V

AND THOU, BROTHER!

CHECKMATE indeed it appeared on the day when a witness for the prosecution stood up in strength to give evidence in the charge framed against Studi and Satya, who, their dignity left at home, stood feebly all alone at the end of the long glary Court, being tried in a language that they did not understand. "Thieves and murderers" was the concise description of the men Studi was said to have harboured, and the speaker's hands clasped behind his back worked nervously, twisting and untwisting. The deceiver is known by his restless hands, says the keen little Indian proverb.

But even the people who had clung to their faith in Raj were beginning to be unsure. Had not the magician seen the killing of Undu the Rat in the Magic Ink? Had he not said in his trance, "Let his relatives go to such and such a tree and they will find one of his bones in the fork thereof"? And had not the relatives gone and found a forearm in the fork of that very tree?

And yet, according to popular report, those two still roamed the country, robbing and pillaging in a most high-handed fashion, and shouted across the village streets, "Hai, Red Tiger! Ho thou, Chotu!" just as if a bag of two thousand rupees reward did not dangle over their heads, and spies were not watching everywhere.

It was true that spies watched everywhere. One day, just after the six months' drawn-out trial had ended disastrously for Studi and Satya, two of them, father and son, joined a party of some thirty men bound for the forest to catch hares.

The thirty knew them for what they were; but they were fellow-villagers, and there was no avoiding them. So they all went up together. None of the thirty had any idea of the whereabouts of Raj just then, and suddenly, to their consternation

they saw him, and feared. For to own to friendship before the spies would lead straight to trouble, and to be with those wretched spies at all was horrible. And what would Raj do ?

Among them was Marut, the herb doctor. He hung back, anxious for Raj, anxious for himself, but keenly alive to the chance given now. What would Raj do ? Would his new religion help him here ? The spies were related to Raj, and for a relative to act as spy passed all bounds of decency. Marut shook with apprehension. Was he going to see a crime ?

Raj was sitting in the mouth of a cave with his gun across his knees. He was alone. As the crowd came up he stood up, his face full of welcome. Then he saw the chief spy—it was he who had murmured, " It is an order," when Sakuni had told him exactly how Raj was to be lamed. Raj had heard about that, of course : he heard everything. For the first time since that day he saw him ; he fixed his eyes on him, and for a moment there was a tense silence. " The test, the test ! " whispered Marut to himself. " What will Raj do ? " The next moment, still looking fixedly upon the spy, Raj opened his arms wide, and advanced towards him, " And thou, *brother !* " he said, and the tears rushed into his eyes, and the other man ran to him, and they embraced, and Raj said no harder word than that, " And thou, *brother !* "

Presently Chotu, who was away at the time, returned. " O elder brother, shall I shoot ? Shall I shoot ? " he cried, not by any means wholly in mischief, and then to the spy, " Shall I shoot thee who wouldst have shot us ? " " Stay thy hand. Do not tease him," said Raj quickly. " I have forgiven him ; we are friends." And though Chotu, who found his captain trying at such times, could not refrain from protest, " Always the same ! Forgive, forgive ! " he obeyed. But the spy's son had heard, and he remembered it against Chotu. A day was to come when he would shoot and no one would say, " Stay thy hand."

CHAPTER VI

THE RISHI, SILK-SCARF, AND A PRICKED BUBBLE

THAT the trial of Studi and Satya had ended in defeat did not appear at once. To their English friends it had sounded almost like victory. The men were merely bound over to keep the peace. But to them, to their whole clan, this meant nothing less than calamity. Whatever the phrase technically meant, practically it laid them open to police inspection of a harassing kind, withthe

fear of blackmail attached. The praise-meeting to return thanks for their acquittal was not enthusiastic. "It is not imprisonment: it is not a fine: but it amounts to both," was their summing up of their wretched situation. Still, it might have been worse, and when the summons came to attend Court again as the case was to be retried, it was a distinct shock. The other side openly rejoiced and, gathering their witnesses, swept off in triumph. And no one, least of all the chief witness for the prosecution, knew that the hour for the victory of truth had struck, and that his tongue would cleave to the roof of his mouth when he stood up in the witness-box.

Studi was still ill, so again the Ford took him to the Court and, leaving him there, went to the sacred falls called the Place of Expiation.

The waterfalls which offer this grace to the bather are some distance from the main road. You climb a mountain road carved in curves up the hill-side. To the right, as you climb, the rocks are sheer; to the left, there is a steep drop to the carpet of the Plains, green in the season of young rice, gold in harvest time. Rocks crop up here and there, palms and many magnificent trees delight the eye. A river flows between wooded banks, and threads a little old-world village; near by rises the grey tower of a temple from its pillared precincts. But that temple is only the outer gate to the very small, still more ancient and sacred shrine in the depths of the wood.

The climbing road opens on the river-side. You see a long staircase of rough-hewn stone, and descend till you come to the level of the river. Scores of little rivers flow everywhere, and you walk through the clear streamlets till you come to the shrine, set as near as may be to the unapproachable loveliness beyond.

For here, when the rains have filled every swift mountain-torrent, is a beauty that passes poor words of ours. Stand at the foot of that white passion of purity and the heart must be dull, the imagination a withered straw, if no appreciation of what lies behind its name dawns upon the mind. Here, if anything earthly can offer it, is the place of the expiation of sin.

In that shrine lived a famous rishi. Clad in his salmon-coloured robe, with his rosary of Siva's beads, his wonderful pictured Wheel of Life, and his photograph of his guru who had lived to an immense age and had been, he said, revived from the grave, he was at any time a striking figure. But seen immediately upon his emergence from a forty hours' trance of meditation, he was as one belonging to another sphere.

And it was then that Carunia first saw him and meeting her

at such a moment he took it as an omen of good, and invited her into his cell, and opened many things to her, interpreting the Wheel, and the wonder thereof.

Presently his talk turned to the way of expiation from sin.

"Is there anything that will change desire?" And to his hearer's surprise the rishi spoke of Raj, "once a mighty robber, but now good and gentle to all, even as a rishi," and he looked up with that wave of the hand which contains a whole sentence of wonder. And as she smiled, glad of this unexpected witness, the holy man, mistaking the smile for one of incredulity, said, shaking his head gravely, and almost reprovingly, as though he held her responsible, "O poor, to be so hunted—he who injures no one!" And he spoke of Raj's forgiveness of his enemies as too wonderful to be explained. The thought of such forgiveness was not new to him, he had read his classics; he knew the fine stanza which speaks of the loyalty due even to the friend who disappoints. "Keep the sad secret hid," said the poet, "hold by him still. The growing grain has husks, the water has its foam, the flower its scentless sheath." But the rishi did not know how to attain to this. "Being forgiven, I forgive," was all Raj said; and this was indeed a dark saying to the rishi.

Shortly after this Carunia went down to the lower temple. Here was the usual crowd of all sorts and conditions of men, and among them was a spirited young fellow with a brilliantly coloured silk scarf flung across his shoulders.

At that time the country was seething with tales of Raj's latest crime. A dacoity full of incident had been described in the papers. But Silk Scarf would have none of it, and he declaimed on Raj to an intently listening group of people who had no desire whatever to hear the Gospel, till Silk Scarf turning to Carunia, said, "Behold, here is Raj's mother," and after that they listened; never had preacher a more compelling text, for all wanted to hear what had caused the Red Tiger to become a worshipper of the Christians' God.

Silk Scarf listened too, interpolating hilarious little tales of his own. It transpired that he was the son of the poet who had written and sold thousands of songs about the robber captain in his bandit days. "But now my father writes no more, for no more are these deeds being done. Raj is a new man: he lives for heaven now. And when the big reward was offered, every good man of every caste braced himself," and he braced his scarf across his shoulders with a quick gesture. "If he is ever caught, it will be by treachery; not otherwise."

By this time it was drawing towards evening and the Court

would certainly have risen. Wondering how poor Studi and Satya were bearing up, their friends went back to the Court, to be met by the two men and all their friends. There was one joyous shout. "Case dismissed! No case!"

"How? Why?"

"We do not know; only we know it is *Case dismissed.* Victory! Victory!" And nobody knew how to be glad enough. Then they trooped back to the Court-house and, kneeling down on the back verandah out of sight of the official world within, thanked God.

But what had happened? The evidence had broken down; that was all that could be told. No one had connected that morning on the hill-side and the party who went up to catch hares, and the encounter with Raj in the cave and his, "And thou, brother," with that morning in Court. But the two mornings were linked together, for the forgiven spy was the chief police witness. When the order came to appear for the retrial, he had endeavoured to get out of his engagement. But he had found that impossible. When he stood up to speak, "And thou, *brother!*" rang in his ears. His evidence utterly collapsed. The case collapsed with it, a pricked bubble. But no one, not even Studi, still less the vexed and baffled Prosecution, had any idea how it came about that the chief false witness had so lamentably failed.

CHAPTER VII

JUBILATE

"THE first one who dares to ring a bell in the Village of the Reeds to call the people to Christian worship shall be beaten by a pariah with a sandal."

The word had stood unchallenged for more years than anyone remembered. No one had rung that bell.

But Raj had been kept from sin, and the men of the village would have felt it shame to blacken his name to save themselves from trouble. So there was trouble, that himsa which had caused them to turn for comfort to Christians, who had led them to the Comforter.

Raj knew that by escaping from jail he had given reason to the enemies of Christ to blaspheme; he was humbled by that thought. It is hardly likely that he ever connected his witness by word and by life with the birth of the little new church. But he loved it dearly; and when the day came for the ringing of the bell, he knew of it, and rejoiced, and from his high places

he tried to keep watch over the threatened Christians and often sent pleading messages, asking (not knowing that he need not have asked) his friends in the Garden House never to forsake the Village of the Reeds.

That first Sunday of public worship marked by the ringing of the bell was a day of holy joy. The bell had been rung once before for the first gathering together of a group of new disciples, and the man with the sandal had not appeared. Now it was to be rung in the presence of a large congregation gathered from the villages round about, and the ringing was to be an open challenge to the powers of darkness. Many people from those villages crowded under the mat-awning that day and waited in breathless expectation. Then someone pointed to the bell, a disc of metal hung from a beam, and put a stick into the ringer's hand, and in a tense silence the first blow was struck, and the second and a third; and then half a dozen clanging strokes struck with the beater's full strength.

"Where is the man with the sandal?"

The words were cried aloud as the last stroke ceased to vibrate, and the crowd drew a long breath.

"Where? Oh, where?"

It was a moment that many a man would have given a lifetime to experience. "Where? Oh, where?" The air thrilled with the question; an old man dashed the water from his eyes.

Then the crowd burst into a laugh, and the answer was shouted like a challenge:

"The Lord is our light and our salvation, whom shall we fear? The Lord is the strength of our life, of whom shall we be afraid?"

Where then were the griefs of the past months? They were forgotten: they were thistledown on the wind. It is not persecution that can hurt the least and the frailest church, and the workers in the Village of the Reeds learned to fear adversity far less than prosperity. "The sun hath looked upon me"; there is peril there. "The solemn shadow of Thy cross is better than the sun."

And somewhere up in the mountains that looked down upon that day of Jubilate, Raj, knowing of it, stood and thought, and longed with a mighty longing to sit just once on the crowded floor with the friends of his boyhood, and learn the right tunes for these new songs that they were singing, the songs he, too, sang so often up in his caves to his own queer tunes. But it could never be, and on Sundays the thought of Raj and Chotu was touched by a greater wistfulness than even on other days. How did they spend the day? Had they any Sunday at all?

Did they even know it was Sunday? Answer came to such questions. For one Sunday a farmer found them among the mountains above the Village of the Reeds. Raj was sitting with his back against a great rock, his gun across his knees, his hymn-book in his hands, and another tucked under his arm. He was singing at the top of his voice.

"Brother, brother," said the farmer alarmed. "Sing softly."

"But why?" said Raj. "The man-hunters do not hunt on Sunday."

"There are only three of us here," said the farmer, meaning only three to scores, if the hunters should appear.

"There are four," said Chotu, meaning that One invisible was there.

They cooked their food then, and had it together with thankfulness, and Raj told how wonderfully food came, "and when it does not come, we are learning not to worry." The farmer had a little rice with him. "See, I have brought you some, even as the birds brought it to the prophet. Eat and be happy. God has sent it." And he told them the story of Elijah and the ravens —crows, he called them. He could not remember where it was written: "Turn over the leaves of your Bible one by one, and you will happen upon it," he said.

Then as the stars rose, Raj pointing up said, "Look at our roof." And they knelt down and prayed for protection. "Take care of us, take care of us, O strong Lord," said Raj, just before he lay down with his books carefully disposed as usual.

In the morning the farmer, upon returning to the Plains, heard of a robbery committed the night before by Raj and Chotu on an oil merchant who had been travelling on the road. And three days later, when he was up again, the farmer laughed over that tale. But Raj did not laugh. He covered his face with his hands and groaned. At last he looked up, and stretching his right hand above his head and looking up steadfastly through the clear sky he said, "God is our witness"—and then turning to the farmer, "Thou also art our witness. Wert thou not here with us? These things are not our deeds."

The farmer did not speak, he was startled by the grief he saw on Raj's face. It was unlike Raj to care much what people thought, at least so far as the farmer knew, his way was to turn bitter thoughts with a laugh. And Raj also was silent. At last he spoke: "We have deserved it," he said in a softened tone. "We had no right to escape from the jail. Every time I hear of a new crime charged to us, I feel this is part of my punishment." Then the farmer understood. He was not wise in the wisdom of

the Schools, but he knew these words were good. And he pondered over the change that had come to Raj, and the things that were happening in the Village of the Reeds, and like many another who was watching this tale unfold, he wondered with a great admiration.

One evening in thundery weather, some of Raj's friends who were on the mountains saw huge masses of clouds roll up and blot out the Plains. But a wind blew from beneath, and the heavy masses lifted. Then was discovered a dazzling blue band of sea some forty miles distant, a lighthouse like a doll's ivory knitting-needle ; a long ridge of pink sand ; and towns, villages, temples, water, fields, roads, shining as if carved in precious stones. Trees of darkest myrtle, which opened to show this cameo of colour, framed it on either side. They in turn were framed by the scarred sides of mountains, iron-grey and black after rain. The forest smoked, and a waterfall plunged where a tarn in the heights had overflowed. Then the wind that had lifted the cloud below rushed through the woods with the sound of mighty wings ; the trees bowed before it. Here, then, the dark, the cold, the wild : there a lighted and untroubled peace.

It was like that sometimes when the devices of the crafty were disappointed, so that their hands could not perform their enterprise ; and the clouds that had seemed overwhelming were blown aside, and a light shone upon the peaceful thoughts of God.

PART IX

In the corrupted currents of this world
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,
And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law ; but 'tis not so above ;
There is no shuffling, there the action lies
In his true nature, and we ourselves compell'd
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults
To give in evidence.

HAMLE

I rejoice that the wheels of this confused world are rolled, and cogged, and driven according as our Lord willeth. Out of whatever airth the wind blow, it will blow us on our Lord. No wind can blow our sails overboard ; because Christ's skill, and honour of His wisdom, are empawned and laid down at the stake for the sea-passengers, that He shall put them safe off His hand on the shore, in His Father's known bounds, our native home ground.

SAMUEL RUTHERFORD,
1637.

CHAPTER I

IT'S SO BAD FOR THE DEVIL

BUT the story has run on ahead of its date. It goes back now to the beginning of Studi's trial, and to the time when Per, with his heart set on living in the forest with the men and sharing their risks, had gone from the Garden House, carrying food enough for a couple of days, his blanket, his change of clothes, and his books. Nothing had been heard of him. He might be with the men ; for that he was not seen with them by any who went up from the Plains, did not prove he was not there. The hunted learn to be careful.

During those six months, the period covered by Studi's first trial in Court, the means taken to coerce the people to trap or to betray Raj and Chotu was a turning of justice to wormwood, and it roused the people to indignation. They were also kept in continual anxiety lest a false case should be brought against one or another of the community. They could not always be watching the thatched eaves of their little houses lest stolen articles of robbers' tools should be thrust under them. One such tool found by Studi in his roof caused alarm among many law-abiding people.

It was the giant gimlet used by thieves in piercing the mud walls of a house. And yet nothing could ever be proved. Before a wrong actually happens there is no case. After it happens there is no chance.

But the people bore everything patiently, till a call for one of their women sharpened their anxiety about the others. For, one night, a young wife was called. Her husband was from home. She rose, and was rushing to the well to end her life when the neighbours, roused by her cries, hurriedly gathered what money they could, to buy the messenger off.

This enraged the villages. The men brought the women about whom they were most anxious to the protection of the Garden House. "Is this the Sirkar?" they asked. They were persuaded to believe that indeed it was not the Sirkar.

Among the most outspoken in denouncing this accumulation of false charges, himsa and blackmail was that brave and upright officer called Fides by his friends. He had not the remotest personal interest in Raj. No one could accuse him of caste bias. He did not even belong to the same part of India. But he was a gentleman and a sportsman, and had convictions and expressed them. Of his feeling upon the subject of Raj, the Garden House knew nothing when one day, unexpectedly, he called as a mere matter of courtesy. It was soon apparent, however, that he knew what was going on, and stood for righteousness, and before long Fides, and a little later, as will shortly be told, the courageous civilian who, during his short term in office, effectually stopped himsa, became strength and cheer to spirits tempted to despair about the country. For what cannot even one man do in whom burns the white-hot passion of justice?

Fides so often suggested Lowell that at last one of his friends sent the familiar lines to him:

> They are slaves who fear to speak
> For the fallen and the weak;
> They are slaves who will not choose
> Hatred, scoffing, and abuse,
> Rather than in silence shrink
> From the truth they needs must think:
> They are slaves who dare not be
> In the right with two or three.

"But why did the men not come in?" said some who looked on from the far and peaceful edge of these events and thought that Raj and Chotu's surrender would end the troubles at a stroke. The people most nearly concerned were not so sure. Raj and Chotu were very unsure. Only those who knew least were sure

Photo by E. E. Heath

PER AS HE STOOD THINKING OF THE DAYS THAT WERE PAST

Behind him is the mouth of the cave where the loot was found. (Pages 282 and 283.)

Photo by A. G. Arnot

PER MEASURING THE DROP TO THE POOL

Sixty feet below, with a long trail of creepers cut from the forest. He is standing on the edge of the rose-coloured rock. (Page 91.)

of anything during those days. And everything was so confused and hopeless and desperate that who can wonder if the thoughts of the hunted men were confused and hopeless and desperate? Day in, day out, they lived in that uneasy place, between the devil and the deep sea.

"It was pitiful to see Raj, all his happy ways fell from him and he would look wildly about—verily it was pitiful," said Dass. He did want to do right; with many tears and temptations he struggled on, and if his decision were wrong, at least he was not indifferent. "On the same day, having seen one working on the Sabbath, he said to him: 'O man, if indeed thou knowest what thou doest, thou art blessed; but if thou knowest not, thou art accursed, and a transgressor of the law.'"* That word in some measure clears Raj. He was breaking the letter of the law by staying out. But to come in would be to drag his people to destruction. What of the spirit of the law—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"? Definitely then, knowing what he was doing, he did what he did. The finer virtue of obedience and surrender to certain shame and death—his people forbidden to defend him—was out of his sight and, if he had seen it, he would have said, "It is high: I cannot attain unto it." And yet he might have attained. His story is true to our poor life; it is pitched to a lower key than the heavenliest.

In the midst of sordid misery and much red shame, there were frequent raids on the Garden House for *Himsa noteeses*. These were large squares of cardboard upon which Carunia printed in English and in the vernacular the following plain words:

Himsa is against the Law of the Sirkar.

If himsa be done to this man (or woman as the case might be) the Sirkar shall be informed of it.

And she signed the *notees* with her two names, foreign and Indian, and pierced its two upper corners, and tied string through them, so that the card could be hung up; the people believed in it, as if it had been a magic charm. And there is no doubt that it acted. Just then such information, by whomsoever given, did nothing. But the *notees* expressed an honest conviction of what the Sirkar truly intended to be, in spite of appearances. It had a moral value and an influence, and many a grateful recipient returned a week or two later to say, "Verily it greatly protected us. And my husband's sister asks for one to hang up in her house, and so does my mother-in-law's brother's paternal uncle's

* An otherwise unrecorded saying of Christ, found in the manuscript known as Codex Bezae, after Luke vi. 5.

son" (the exact relationship was always stated). At any rate it comforted them, and that was something.

At last, the day came when the cup of bitterness overflowed; men had been threatened, blackmail had been quite shamelessly levied, and, though petitions had been sent to Authority, nothing had happened for the relief of the people. (Perhaps those petitions had never reached their destination. There are ways by which such documents can be deflected.) A young married woman had been seized, carried off to the police station and kept alone among men for many hours. When she was released in the dusk of the evening, with a four-mile walk before her, she was told to return next day with the information that was required; "Else we shall shoot thy men and say we shot them by mistake, thinking they were Raj and Chotu." And the women in panic besought the elder of the two Englishwomen who were living among them, to sleep in one or other of the threatened houses; which she did, spending the night on a mat on the floor with the women about her.

It was then that the men of the villages moved. They poured into the Garden House compound, and stood in a solid mass under the trees. "They have taken our guns (gun licences had been withdrawn from Raj's caste-folk in that part of the country, whether they were related to him or not), but we have our knives" (the keen knives used in work upon the palms). It was an ugly word and it muttered through the crowd.

That was an anxious hour. The outlaws were not the question now; Raj and Chotu, after all, were merely two poor chased figures crossing for a moment the field of the Sirkar's administration. What had so greatly roused these men, by nature so patient, was something apart from Raj and Chotu, something whose roots ran deep into the nature of things. They stood now, moody, or excited; but quick to respond to a familiar voice, saying over and over again in various ways one word: "Be patient a little longer. This is not the Sirkar. Help will come." And it came.

Just when their patience was wearing thin again, an Indian civilian of courage and character was appointed to that distracted corner of the country. He came with his ears filled with the tales that had stopped the ears of others. He looked through the eyes provided and saw nothing but what he was intended to see. But he was not satisfied with anything except the truth. Before he had been long in the district, he began to feel his way towards it. The day that he found it will never be forgotten in the villages. It was as though a tap were turned off which had run at full cock for months. The himsa stopped.

The relief of the people cannot be expressed. They recognized in their new ruler one who carried on the old tradition ; there was no more of the talk that leads to mischievous madness. By his courageous action—he stood alone in his reading of the situation—he quenched the first spark of fire that would have flamed far.

The bewildered subordinate police commented audibly on this sudden turn of affairs. " A week ago it was, ' Bully, or be bullied,' now the word has gone forth, ' Bully not ; do no himsa.' Hai, brother," and the perplexed one called across the road to a brother policeman, " Canst thou explain it ? "

A week or so before, on that same road, an inoffensive old man had been brutally knocked about, and crying weakly he had staggered to the nearest cover saying over and over, " What have I done to receive this ? " But now he and his kind could walk where they would, no man laying hands upon them. So powerful to this day is the word, the less than a word, the mere influence of the Man in authority. For India asks for king, not figurehead.

But even under the quietness there was a murmuring of fear. " It is too good to last ; it will begin again when he goes away." And when it was as they had feared, the wisdom of the wise old stories opened afresh : the hydra's central head was immortal ; as for others, cut off one, and two appeared. But the story is brave every way. The sprouting of the double heads was stopped. The immortal head was buried under tons of rock. When will arise for India her Hercules, her Iolaus ? Or will the stables never be cleansed till One comes in righteousness and turns the two rivers of justice and mercy through the stalls ? But it is wonderful what a single man can do who has no thought of himself ; and when people came to the Garden House to look at the photograph of an English civilian which hangs in the chief room of the house, and as they stood before it, with some grateful story on their lips of a swift deed that saved a homestead from destruction, Carunia would recall a saying of his spoken when she had rather wished that the Christians at least would turn the other cheek to the smiter : " But it's so bad for the devil," he said (to let him win every time he meant). " It's so bad for the devil." (F. R. HEMINGWAY, I.C.S.)

CHAPTER II

THE EYE-WITNESS WRITES A LETTER

IT was exceedingly bad for the devil when he got his own way with a poor, easily terrified lad, who was required to give evidence about the murder of another spy sent up to waylay Raj and

decoy him down to rob. "After they had killed him," said the boy glibly—he had described exactly how the killing was accomplished—"Chotu wanted to shoot me lest I should tell. But Raj said, 'Let him go, he is only a boy!'" So to the lightest touch the story was credible.

The spy who had been killed was a thief, and had been caught thieving; but he had promised to get Raj in, had been sent up the mountains to do so. He was, if possible, to entice them to rob with him, and then betray them. Soon the bazaars were full of a tale about a quarrel between that thief and his fellow-thieves by the Black Water under the mountain, and of a shooting that followed. The mother of the dead man went rushing down the main street of her village tearing her streaming hair, and there was a hurried consultation within closed doors—but, even so, that talk escaped—followed by a call to the unfortunate boy.

It was just before this that Dass gave a lift to some police constables, who were trudging back after going to meet the expected Raj and Chotu and the spy at the appointed rendezvous. Naturally he heard all about the plan that had failed. He knew about many similar plans, as indeed did most people; for it happened that the man to whom they were confided by their originator was a close friend of Raj and Chotu, and had beautiful ways of sending useful information to the forest by way of the bazaars. Dass knew, everybody knew, how Raj met such proposals. For even if he were robbing, as some perplexed people had begun to believe, everyone knew that he would never condescend to common thieving with men who broke into houses in the dark. So the present fiasco was no surprise. And the villages had been waiting with interest for the turning over of the next page of this sometimes dramatic story-book.

And the next had been a flaring picture, with high lights, black shadows, a pool of blood, and other unpleasant matters. And in an evil house that day, huddled up like a spider enveloped in her own foul web, Poi, the man of bones, crouched and shuddered in his misery. For the dead spy was bound to him by many close ties. So Poi had furnished the bones after all. Thus grind those mills that grind exceeding small.

"And now the Great has arrived in his car. What honours the village enjoys! Now he is duly inspecting the corpse. Now he is regarding it thus—(gravity sits on the face of the narrator, knitted brows, disgusted mouth). Now there is much conversation. Now he is departing." Nobody seemed to regret the corpse, except the wild-haired mother and Poi and men of his

kind. The people generally bore the loss with equanimity. They have a proverb about such an one, "He is a bandicoot" (a bandicoot is a large and peculiarly odious rat) "who has seen many days."

Hardly had the dust raised by the car settled down on the village street, and long before the dust of talk had settled, a message came to the Garden House, sent by the leading Hindus. That Raj was a Christian did not seem to make them feel any the less keen that he should have fair play; indeed, all through that year the finest element in men of all creeds came to the surface where Raj was concerned. His story pierced to the hearts of men.

"The boy who was compelled to say that Raj did that deed is in danger," was the message the Hindus sent, "for he has repented and, being much agitated at the result of his lie, is now telling the truth. We beseech a shelter for him. He is anxious to go with you to the Great, to whom he was caused to lie, and confess it."

But before an answer could be sent back they had hurried him over the borders to the Native State, in their pity that so young a boy should be in such peril. In due time that boy wrote a letter:

"A month ago Raj and Chotu killed a robber, so you will have heard. About that affair I was anxious to tell you direct. I am anxious to tell you about the getting of the deposition. But if I come and see you, himsa will be, so I write by letter."

In brief, he wrote as follows: "About the above murder, I was sent for next morning. I said, 'I do not know.'

"'Shall I do himsa to you, or will you give a deposition according to my word?' said one.

"To that I, thinking of some who formerly had needles stuck in the quick of the nails, and of one or two who had forced into their mouths that which produces madness, fearing such would be done to me, gave the deposition. I was given twenty-five rupees."

After writing out the deposition, which gives the details of the murder which he, the eye-witness, had "seen" committed by Raj, he ends the letter thus: "Now the reason I write this is because it (the deposition), which can cause a man to be put to death, is a great lie. My mind being distressed, I write."

Hardly believing that this could be, Carunia read the letter again from the first word to the last. "He is willing, as he said before, to come to you if you will take him to the Great," said the boy's messenger. "It is very unsafe for him, I hardly like

to tell you he is willing. But he is ashamed of the lie, and wants to confess it to him whom he deceived, and he says he will not be afraid if only you will take him."

From that time on, to have to do with Raj meant to move in a room whose shutters were shut, and from whose furniture black threads were fastened that went every way. And to touch even one might cause any kind of distress. But some instinct, a kind of sixth sense, warned; or a light was let into the room when it seemed impossible to walk at all without touching one of those threads.

"The secret of a joyful life is to live dangerously," said Sanderson of Oundle to his boys, quoting Nietzsche in letter, if not in spirit. And "we perish if we cease from prayer," he said. Joyful is hardly the adjective those days would have chosen; but for all that there would have been no joy in a refusal of the danger. And true indeed was it then, as it is ever, to cease from prayer is to perish.

And from this time, too, there was a certain awful looking on to the end; and, as more and more the machinations of this underworld appeared, a fear for men who, from their guarded places, sinned against the helpless, came upon all who watched. What, oh what, must the day of reckoning be? Alice Meynell spoke then with her deep word:

"A riddling world!" one cried.
"If pangs must be, would God that they were sent
To the impure, the cruel, and passed aside
The holy innocent!"

"But I. Ah no, no, no!
Not the clean heart transpierced; not tears that fall
For a child's agony; nor a martyr's woe;
Not these, not these appall.

"Not docile motherhood,
Dutiful, frequent, closed in all distress;
Not shedding of the unoffending blood;
Not little joy grown less;

"Not all-benign old age
With dotage mocked; not gallantry that faints
And still pursues; not the vile heritage
Of sin's disease in saints;

"Not these defeat the mind,
For great is that abjection, and august
That irony. Submissive, we shall find
A splendour in that dust.

"Not these puzzle the will.
Not these the yet unanswered question urge.
But the unjust stricken; but the hands that kill
Lopped; but the merited scourge;

"The sensualist at fast;
The merciless felled; the liar in his snares;
The cowardice of my judgment sees, aghast,
The flail, the chaff, the tares."

CHAPTER III

THE NOTEES

THE string held at too tight tension snaps. Something would have snapped then and often thereafter, if it had not been for that ever blessed will o' the wisp, who dances lightly over the swamps of life and misleads nobody but fools. Raj was one of those big benevolent men who have no room for petty spites. He had dozens of friends among the police, "good fellows, not their fault they are *polees*," he would say tolerantly, and except for the downright cruel or false, he had no hard words or thoughts. When he heard that he had had the honour of providing an excellent supper for a police officer, he laughed his hilarious laugh, and the joke ran far over the mountains, and set many a little house laughing too.

This officer was stationed at the foot of the hills with a posse of police, whose duty it was to hunt for the outlaws, or waylay them as they sauntered down to the villages. But Raj had as intimate a knowledge of who was where as had any concerned in catching him. He had friends in two Native States as well as in British India, and several of them were friends of the officers responsible for the various moves that were made in those days, so he was rarely at a loss in making the swift changes demanded by his way of life.

He went out shooting now as if that particular posse were of no account. One day a fine sambhur fell to his gun. He cut off what he required for himself and Chotu, and left the rest for the poor man who brought rice. The poor man took it down, and was about to have it prepared for the family pot, when he remembered that the savour of that pot might penetrate to the officer near by, so he took him a goodly share, remarking truthfully that he had found it in the forest and supposed that it was Raj again. So everyone was pleased, the officer, who liked venison, and before whose vision floated bright if elusive dreams

of kudos ; the faithful poor man, who felt he had secured that officer's favour, a very great matter to a man in his circumstances ; Raj, who threw back his head and laughed a long laugh when the poor man told him about it : " To think *we* should provide a good supper for *him !* " Everyone indeed was satisfied except the Forest Officer ; that venison had a six months' sentence tacked on to it. But what could he do ? He could hardly arraign Law. So all went well.

But where was Per ? He was not with the men. That was by this time evident. Dura of the far country, and a very fine older man, and Dass, and others who had proved Raj true and believed in him, kept in touch in various ways. Not one of this group of men was of Raj's caste, nor were any two of them of the same caste. What made them care so much ? Such unselfish interest is not usual in any caste-bound part of India, unless a man be a great and noted saint. But men of all castes loved Raj and gathered tidings of him as he passed from place to place. And yet mystery must always hang over a man who is an outlaw. Be he as merry-hearted as old King Cole, he walks in a mist, and the winds that blow it aside do not blow every day.

And now the mist had gathered round Per too.

Presently there was a glimpse of the two men, Raj and Chotu, earnestly writing. For the word had reached them, " Lo, three of the Great are coming to camp among us " ; and Raj had said to Chotu, " Come, let us write a *notees*, and fasten it up in the town, one shall be near the *polees* station, the other on the trunk of a tree where all pass and all may read. The Great are sure to hear of it."

It was a bold idea, and suited them exactly. They wrote that *notees* laboriously, and made two clear copies which they fastened up in two conspicuous places in the town where the Great had pitched their tents under the mango trees. The air was thick with murder talk then, and it was being said that they stalked the police with intent to kill, so they began :

" After we left the jail we could have killed, if we had wished to do so, very many men. We, knowing it is sin to kill, have been quiet. It is falsely said that we kill. It is falsely said that we rob. What we (formerly) robbed from the rich we gave to the poor. Now we rob no man.

" While we are living thus without sinning, the *polees* putting these false charges upon us, are making how many endeavours to shoot us. Let this be known to the chief men of this town, and let them make these matters known to the Great."

Then they told of the offences with which they were charged,

and of how two men had been sent up to make friends with them and then find means to disable or drug them. The men sent up told them they were threatened with punishment if they failed to do this. "And we earnestly beseech the chief men of the town, who know of our innocence, to intercede for us, that it may be believed we are not robbing," were the last words of the *notees*.

There was one sentence that made their friends anxious. Raj gave fair warning to a certain spy that, if he persisted in haunting them, he would be summarily dealt with. But when Raj had his chance with that man and could have slain him offhand, he met him with affection and forgiveness.

This writing was read by all but those for whom it was specially intended. The town was full of talk about it; but the talk was in undertones. The three Great, who held their inquiries in that town, heard nothing till too late to retrieve the notice; for it was, of course, immediately torn down. And when one of the three did hear and did his best to track it to its source, he was told that the notice was doubtless the work of a disgruntled subordinate policeman.

But the people knew better, and they knew too that Raj was not stalking the police anywhere at any time, with any intent to kill. For he was a famous stalker. From his boyhood he had practised stalking the herons that fished in the wide flats of the rice fields. No bird is harder to approach, or needs a swifter stroke, if it is to be killed by hand; but time and again Raj, approaching it warily from behind as it fished on the wide rice flats, slashed the head off at a stroke with his curved knife, a horrid tale, but significant. No one knew better than his foes that, had he chosen, he could have turned the chase. It was this that lent point to his indignant remonstrance when clumsy murders were attributed to him. If he had wanted to kill, he would have killed as an artist, not a bad-tempered fool.

The chief men, to whom all this was, of course, well known, were exercised in mind. To take the truth to Authority would lead to trouble later on. But some eighteen of them discussed it; and at last, fortified by an urgent message from Carunia who told them not to fear, for the Great wanted the truth, they decided to go in a body. To their earnest appeal that she would tell it instead, she could only say that she had, but had failed. She did not tell them, though it was true, that she had been as a bird that beats its wings against a pane of glass. They had a better chance. "Fear not," she said. "How can the Great know the truth if only one voice tell it?" So the eighteen arranged a day.

Meanwhile, Raj and Chotu hopefully hovered near the town, so that if they heard of the chief men going to the Great, and if those powerful people, in whose hands their fate lay, showed any sign of relenting, they might know of it at once. One night they were on the road leading out of the town when two carts passed them. The drivers were smoking the rank cigar of the country, and as Raj badly wanted a smoke he stopped the first cart. The other stopped too, and the occupants of both, the two brides and grooms and the guests of a double wedding in the town, disembarked and accosted Raj, who salaamed to them all.

"But we heard thou wert robbing," they said, not altogether comfortable, for they were heavily jewelled.

"You have nothing to fear from us," said Raj, "but if you meet our imitators you will have much to fear. Let us see you safely home."

It was like old times, Raj and Chotu walked beside the carts for four miles to the village for which the wedding-party was bound, passing on their way—and this spiced that pleasant hour—not far from the tents of the Great. And they smoked luxuriously.

It was while those tents were standing that Carunia, walking with some women a little way behind two or three village men, heard repeated fairly correctly all that Authority had said to her and all that she had said in reply, on that memorable morning in the quiet English drawing-room, when the "Pilgrims' Chorus" had sounded in her ears.

"What talk is this?" she said to the men.

"Is it not true talk? It was told at a dinner."

"At a dinner?"

"But verily. By him, to his wife, and he said——"

"Nay, but I do not wish to hear. It is unfitting that such talk should be in the villages."

"I have been labouring with his cook," was the simple reply. "For two hours have I laboured. I have now thoroughly conveyed the truth to him. And it may be, when upon a propitious occasion he has pleased his master with an excellent dinner, opportunity may be to tell it to his mistress, and she will tell it to her lord. Thus, as it were of itself, the truth will reach him."

Whoso knows India will catch the authentic note.

And now the eighteen sent a message. "We are almost immediately going all together, to lay the truth before the Great."

But the Great had other work to do. They had waited as long as they saw fit. Before that kindly leisurely crowd had

loitered along the road to the camp, they had gone; and their servants were busy taking down the tents.

CHAPTER IV

GO AND WATCH

THEN up through the miles of forest went Raj; that hope dead, what use in waiting? Up over the shoulder of the scarred mountain, in whose cracks and seams low trees make little green waterfalls, he and Chotu walked despondently. On the steep face of that mountain, a crag, like a man's hand held upright, offers such a magnificent sentry-post that, standing there unseen from any point of view, Raj could command the whole plain. They stood there awhile looking longingly for the coming of a friend. Raj was missing Per, no message had come from him; but Raj knew that there was no forgetting, no misdoubting; that battle need never be fought again. And now in his need another strong friend was given.

In the Native States lived a brave and influential man; he had read about Raj's conversion in the newspaper; for, as though to set Raj as a target for devils and evil men, that fact had been chronicled far and wide by both the English and vernacular Press. This man was interested, and had long desired an opportunity of verifying the stories that were everywhere. Was Raj a hypocrite of hypocrites, or was he a true man?

One day, shortly after Raj and Chotu had crossed the boundary-line and found themselves in Native State territory, this man's servants told him that they had heard that the outlaws were somewhere on the mountains near his (their master's) estate.

"Go then," he answered, "go and watch them. Let them not know they are being watched. Watch every movement, especially of the man Raj, and come back to me and report."

Raj had brought up rice enough to last for some little time, and game was plentiful in those rich forests. The foresters who had known him in old days were unpurchasable. Had he not helped them to preserve the Sirkar's goods? The shepherds knew him. Had he not helped to guard their flocks? And now that he was back among them two traditions held the field: one that he was most dangerous, the other that he was harmless, and both, of course, served to protect him. It were well to leave dangerous men alone: why hurt a harmless man? So both ways Raj was helped. For by establishing a lie about the Red Tiger's fierceness, Raj's chief hunters had overreached themselves and

planted a hedge round him. One day a policeman met Per on the mountains. "We poor underlings are sent to do this terribly dangerous thing," he said to Per, "and have not we also our wives and families and our own lives to consider? Why should we have to run into a wild beast's jaws?" And then, using every honorific he could command, he besought Per, should he meet him, to beseech the honourable the Maharajah to descend and deliver himself into the humble hands of his slave who would with all due respect convey him back to captivity. As for the other fence, the angels kept it in good repair.

And now, in and out among the people whom Raj met upon the mountains, there were men who watched and listened. They drew near in the evenings when the camp fire was lighted by a rock, and hunters and shepherds gathered round it and sang songs and told stories; at such times that which is in a man shows its head for good or ill. They heard the rollicking laugh, the good-natured chaffing, the ordinary simple everyday talk of a man who had nothing to hide, except his place of refuge. They saw, too, the goatskin bag pulled out, and listened as Raj read from his beloved books, and they often heard him sing and chant lyrics and songs. Then they saw the books put away and the bag pushed carefully under whatever rough pillow Raj had, and awed and touched they saw him kneel, and heard his petitions, direct, simple as a child's. And all this they told to their master.

Then that man made up his mind, blame him who will, that to help Raj was no sin; and he sent him ammunition, "for a man must live," he said, "and how can he live if he cannot shoot game? Can he live on bare rice?"

Dura had heard of this man, and one day went to see him. There was some cautious by-play of conversation, for each wanted to be sure of the other before he showed his thought. But at last they trusted each other, and Dura told of his experiences in British India, and the Christian man told of his servants' reports, and a little group of friends grew up round Raj, so that he was wonderfully cared for and, in some measure at least, prepared for the heavy trouble that was soon to come upon him.

CHAPTER V

INSTANS TYRANNUS

Among the little country towns that lie upon the Plains is one which is divided into two parts by a river that flows over a wide sandy bed. On the one side of the river are orderly Moslem

streets, and a mosque whose austere lines and pure whiteness strike the eye in a land almost wholly Hindu. On the other side of the river there is a small stone temple buried in the darkness of trees and surrounded by its old high wall; the Hindu houses related to it hardly take the trouble to make streets. From a distance, especially in the light of evening, the scene is almost Egyptian in expression, for from the tawny land behind the town three little hills stand up like pyramids. In the higher of these curious abrupt little hills, the Great Pyramid, someone lately called it, Raj once spent a week. From its bare sides and summit he could see the vast circle of the Plains where he was reported to be carrying on such astonishing activities. Not a week but carried its tale. Far and near he and his notorious band were at work, so the world said, and here he was with his one faithful follower, and one other who brought up food. "He was often perplexed, and often sad, but sometimes he would cheer up and laugh, for he knew there must come an end to it," is all that has come to his friends from that week on the pyramid.

One early morning, shortly after Raj and Chotu's peaceful stay in the forest, the town turned out into the streets to talk of a crime committed in the dark; a policeman had been shot in his sleep. The news was scattered swiftly to the villages all round. The Garden Village heard the tale at once, and knew, as every other village knew, that the crime would be charged to Raj. "Does he not do everything everywhere?" said the people. "Wait and see. It will certainly be so." And when it was known, as it soon was, that in very truth Raj had been in the town that night, there was no doubt in anyone's mind; Raj would be named as the guilty man.

But a caste man who had business there, chanced to be in the town that day, and he forsook the crowds in the streets and found his way to the little knot of men who stood near the house in whose verandah the wounded man was lying. An hour later every house within reach had heard the tale:

"They had summoned the Great by the wire, hastily he had come. At a little distance from the verandah stood he, and he gnawed his fingers for vexation of spirit. And his officer inquired of the wounded policeman, who answered again and again that he knew nothing about the matter, being asleep and wakened by the shot in his body. Thus said he."

Others carried the same tale. Later there was another which was, of course, rapidly and efficiently broadcasted: "The dying policeman has signed a deposition stating that he saw Raj and Chotu, and that Raj shot him; he has

signed the deposition. He is dying. . . . He is dead." Whether or not it was true that such a deposition had been signed, no one, of course, outside the police department, knew for certain. But as within a day or two the Press reported the crime as Raj's work, and the people were told that he had done it, and in the end the official summing up of Raj was "a desperate criminal to whom several murders may be safely ascribed," there seems little reason to doubt that the evidence required to prove him so had somehow been furnished. And the Garden House was left with the two tales, one, the earlier, mere hearsay useless in a Court of law, the other, apparently evidence of the utmost value.

No one who had followed Raj so far could see him killing a sleeping man, but the fogs of surmise perplexed what, where he was concerned, had been plain before, and some began to fear lest Raj, caught in a scuffle, was after all responsible for that shot. It was a strange time. In countries scattered over the face of the earth people had prayed, "Let Thy loving Spirit lead him forth into the land of righteousness." Could this leading into the land of foul suspicion be the answer to that prayer? For a season, whose travail need not be recalled, the only word that came was *Wait*. "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from Him." And then comfort came, as comfort does, walking softly by unexpected and unsought paths.

A Government servant, whose duty had required him to be near the wounded policeman, had occasion to visit the Garden House, and when the talk turned to that shooting, as all talk appeared to do at that time, he said quietly that he, for one, was assured of Raj's innocence, not only because such a cowardly act was unlike all that was known of Raj, but because he had heard what the dying man had said when he was first questioned.

He was asked if he would be willing to come forward and say so in fact, should Raj be arrested and tried for his life. He did not refuse. He could not have refused; but India will understand what lay in his reluctant, "I have a wife and children." It was well for him and for that wife and those children that Raj was not called to stand at any earthly bar. Yet another confirmation was granted; for another official, whose position however sealed his lips, had heard the wounded policeman speak. And at last, but too late to help Raj, a near relative of the murdered man told, but privately lest trouble should befall him, just what the poor man had said to him in his last hours as truth before God. "I know nothing," he had said, as he had said at first, "I never saw Raj."

Meanwhile something more, though only a little, had become

generally known. Raj and Chotu had visited that country town that night because a friend who lived there had invited them. They were leaving the town before dawn when a message reached them "So-and-so has left a bundle on the verandah and it contains money. He has forgotten it. No one is in sight." "We have not come down to rob," had been Raj's answer to that, and he had marched off. Half a dozen friends who were seeing him to the hills were with him. No one knew where he was now.

But Dass found him. He had gone to the Valley of the Rosy Rocks and, as Dass crossed the waste land leading up to the valley, he saw Raj by a great boulder on the open hill-side. Its black and yellow-ochre colouring made it distinguishable from some distance, and from it Raj could see the approaches to his valley and welcome friends or disappear from foes. He welcomed Dass now.

But he was in the deepest dejection. He knew, of course, that the crime would be laid to his door. He knew it would be "proved." And yet he did not know who shot the policeman. There had been a scrimmage, he said, as he and Chotu were leaving the town. He and Chotu had hurried off. He did not know any more. "God is our witness," he said.

He had said it before. The word he used is from the Sanscrit and means eye-witness, witness in Court. There by the rock Raj stood, and, with the gesture Dass knew well, he raised his right hand to heaven and, looking up, said most solemnly, "God is our Eye-witness."

"Now read," was his next word, and he pulled out his Bible and opened at the fifteenth Psalm:

"Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart."

And then the three men knelt down, and Raj called upon the Lord in his distress.

And after that Dass came back, assured in mind that, whatever had happened, Raj was clear. But that he would ever be able to prove his innocence he did not for one moment think. Nor did anyone.

And this told on Raj; he yielded to discouragement, feeling hemmed in on all sides, and very hard pursued. What, after all, if he had shot the man? Would it have been so fearful a sin? Who had broken his leg? twisted his ankle? flung him trussed-up in that horrible knot of torment into the cart? Was it not by the order of the police? If he turned on them, would it be such a deadly sin? But he had not. No; but if he had?

And this was the hour of his peril, and he rose up and fled.

But whither? Far away from the smoothly flowing stream was a house where his God was worshipped. Straight to that house he and Chotu went now. They arrived there weary, dishevelled, disheartened. "The first thing the children asked for was soap, and the second thing was a Bible," wrote their hosts (their Bible had been lost in the swift journey); the letter might have been to any anxious mother about any sick children. "They are very eager that their mother should know that all is well with them, and they are longing for a letter."

Quickly and with thankfulness that letter was written. It was the first time the men had been where they could be taught and helped, and might it not be the first step towards what had always been the highest hope, even the land of righteousness? "I know the thoughts that I think towards you, thoughts of peace and not of evil to give you an expected end"—were the peaceful words to be fulfilled? "They are reaching out to the Great Father, and He will see their desire and meet them and teach them," was their hosts' word in writing to another friend. But the letter telling of the children's well-being had travelled for over a week, and the reply which urged them to wait till Carunia could communicate more directly with them must also travel by circuitous ways, and it was strangely delayed. It arrived just after the departure of the two who had so longingly watched for it.

When God is in charge, can things go wrong? Is there such a word as "accident" as regards a matter which has been committed to Him? The day came when that delay appeared as the work of angels. Raj and Chotu had been tracked. The net was thrown when they slipped through the meshes and vanished—the word shows the manner of that disappearance. They were there one moment, happy, grateful; gone the next, and without a word of thanks or of farewell.

A poisoned egg had been given to them by an unknown hand. There was only the smallest pin-prick in the shell, but they recognised it for a sign. They knew then that they had been tracked, and that not only they, but also their brave and generous hosts, were in the utmost danger. They did not stop to speak a word of thanks. With the instinct of wild creatures of the woods, made wise by sharp experience, they melted into the forest.

To the end they remembered and blessed those friends, who plucked them forth out of the miry clay and set them on their feet. "They saved us from despair," said Raj.

But how strange it all was, this malevolence of hate, this determination to ruin the men, body and soul. Behind the few human beings who darkened the understanding of those above them, behind all human agencies stood one, the adversary. Read thus, Browning's poem, " Instans Tyrannus," reads true.

CHAPTER VI

SUSPENSE, RELIEF

CAN suspense be put into a book? Put it in, with anything of the power of real life, and the reader flies to the last page. Perhaps there is enough in real life; in a book it is intolerable.

But the story was full of it. The little stories of comfort did not always come in just the most painful moments, though indeed they often did. There were hours that are nightmares to look back upon. And now what had become of Per? Not a word of him reached his friends, not a whisper of him.

Per had known when he set forth that he was attempting a very dangerous thing; for deeds were being done at that time which would not be credited now that the chase is over. No one outside knew of the anxiety, for to make any kind of public inquiry might have led to worse trouble. Per's wife, who was not in India, wrote begging for news of him. There was none to give her.

At last a wreck of a man, gaunt as a shadow, appeared at the Garden House. He had never reached Raj and Chotu. He had broken down on the way; a fever had seized him, and withered him up. At first he had not written because he could not. Later he feared lest his absence had stirred suspicion, and when suspicions are about, the less written the better. So, hardly realizing how sharp the fear about him was, he lay low in a silent house till he could travel. And now here he was, a man who staggered when he tried to stand, but all quick with desire to try again.

And as soon as he could walk he was in the forest, and he found Raj and Chotu; and his heart melted with love and awe as he heard of how they had been succoured through the weeks. Suspense and relief; anxiety that sat like a familiar; delight; pure dancing, shining joy; what a vivid thing life can be!

An hour of deepest interest was spent in hearing of the death of the police-spy beloved by Poi, the man of bones.

The first bazaar rumour was partly true, but it ran into fiction

towards the end, the spy's death was not by the Black Water, but on the borders of the wood.

He had found Raj and Chotu, and tried to lure them down to rob, but that had failed. Apart from his determination not to rob, Raj was by this time too well aware of the snare set by a packet of cartridges to be caught by it. Not that he refused the ammunition. He accepted it all with a cheerful chuckle, and there were weeks when the order that every man of Raj's caste in the district near the mountains should return his gun and any ammunition he possessed, did Raj little harm, for the Sirkar considerately supplied all he required free of cost.

The spy, however, was not troubled by Raj and Chotu's refusal to walk into his trap. He had two strings to his bow. He confessed that he had been robbing and was wanted by the police, he had everything to fear if he went back to his village, but if only he might stay with Raj, he would not rob any more. And his painted words appealed to Raj, who had sheltered more than one who professed to wish to live straight. Not that he was fond of the man. He had known him of old, knew how bad he was, but then Raj too had been bad—" Go down and get some food," he said, " but go by the other path, for the *polees* may be watching this one, and thou wilt fall into their hands. Go, we shall wait for thee here." And the spy went.

But, unknown to him, a posse of police were watching the other path, for they knew that Raj was near, and though they did not care to venture into the wood they were ready enough to wait near by in the hope of a capture.

Down the path ran the spy, and Raj and Chotu waited on the rocks a little way above. Suddenly they heard shouts followed by a gun shot. It was a moonlight night, and the wood was splashed with pools of light where the trees parted overhead, but they could see nothing, and did not wait to try to see. Up the hill they raced, wondering what had happened. And they knew nothing more till the tale came up of the spy found shot and the inquest, and the evidence given that made them the killers of another man sent in search of them.

" But we had no hand in that killing," said Raj thankfully. Thankfully, for he had not forgotten Undu's horrified eyes when, hoist with his own petard, Undu felt the drugged cup at his mouth. Chotu was true to Raj, he would not deceive him, but he had never professed even to want to keep his hands off such men's throats, and Raj had a feeling sometimes that he would not be able to hold him in, if a terrific temptation—a betrayal, for example—came suddenly upon him. " They must have

mistaken the poor wretch for me," he explained to Per as they discussed the killing. "It is not the first time it has happened, and they have orders to shoot at sight." Apparently the startled spy had reacted to the shouts in the one way natural to him, he may not have even known that the men who shouted were police and, for the moment, his friends.

Per was too much weakened by his illness to share Raj and Chotu's hazards and quick marches through difficult mountain-tracks and thorny thickets, so he could not stay and teach them; he could only shadow them, meeting them frequently and watching over them; he must be content with that.

But he had been willing, more than willing, for the other, the sacrificial life. And not till that little family was reunited, and his friends saw the father with his children, did they quite realize what he had laid on the altar that night when he said, "Yes, Lord."

Sometimes from woods which look dark from the outer edge warblings and trills flow out in clear ripples and upspringings of delight. If from these pages, as from a record responsive to a touch, there could come forth the songs that broke through the story again and again, it might be reviving to spirits almost tired of the reiterated trouble, the oppression of the enemy that makes for heavy going. But words cannot capture that any more than they can capture the mystery of music, or colour, or any other of the golden things of life.

CHAPTER VII

JOTHI, THE TAVERN KEEPER

"Whence shall thy patience be crowned if thou meet with no adversity?"

ADVERSITY sharp and swift met Jothi, the tavern keeper, one night when his kinsman, Raj, came to his tavern by the road-side. What sharpened the sword was the tale of the murdered policeman. If Raj had done that—and the policeman's deposition, as finally presented, was against him, and the only men who could clear him were silent—then no punishment was too severe for people who had anything to do with him. As we have told before, numbers of such bought themselves out of trouble. Others who had not done anything actionable paid to escape from false charges, a state of affairs from which many sucked no small advantage. But the tavern keeper in his simplicity

told what he had done, and, as this happened just after the reported murder, the Sirkar made an example of him.

The Red Tiger robs a till! The Red Tiger robs a tavern! So ran the headlines of the daily paper one morning. But Raj had not robbed. He wanted a drink for himself and Chotu, and holding out a five rupee-note had asked for change.

"There is no change," said the man. "But what bag is that?" said Raj, who knew the ways of the tavern, and he stretched out his hand, took the bag, turned it upside down, laughing as the minute coins poured out, and chaffed the servant, "Verily there is no small change!" Just then the tavern keeper came in, his honest face beaming. "Pay for thy drink here, O husband of my wife's cousin!" he said. "What new custom is this?" and he pushed the five rupee note back—and Raj returned the coppers—an episode which, as it was reported, showed Raj robbing the till one minute, and returning his ill-gotten gains the next. And no one seemed to think it an unlikely proceeding.

Also—and this lent a criminal aspect to the simple act of changing a five rupee note—the word in the charge which should have been translated "small change" was translated by a word meaning *money*. Raj was taking money; it was his usual game.

The tavern keeper, fearing nobody, gave the men a potful of drink; and then he drew Raj out under a banyan tree, and they talked.

"Hold on to this resolve of thine," said Jothi. "Hindu as I am, I am glad thou shouldst be a Christian, if to be a Christian means that thou wilt walk straight to the end of thy days."

"Verily, and verily I will," said Raj with emphasis. "The desires I had have gone from me. Something within me refuses to rob. And I promised," he added, "I promised." And Jothi understood: Raj would not break his promise.

"Is it not hard to keep?"

But Raj could only state facts as he saw them, he could not explain, and Jothi was not much enlightened, but something Raj said stuck in his memory like a burr on a sheep's back.

"What is said about the Christians' God is true. He is with me, yes, always. With Him there is never a letting go of the hand" (it is the usual idiom: "I will never go aside from thee"—as it were on the road of life—and I will never let go thy hand, is the rendering in Raj's vernacular for: "I will never leave thee or forsake thee").

"Then let not thy hand slip out of His hand," said Jothi.

All this was well so far as it went. That one year of disgraceful law-breaking had blackened the family's name. Certainly it

was good to have done with robbing, but where was the sin of treading on a snake? Jothi asked Raj why he had not dealt sternly with his enemies and so vindicated his honour and his family's honour? Why suffer such indignity in this meek manner? It was surely weak to be meek?

But Raj could not be shaken now. He had watched the sun rise on many a shining morning since that day in the Valley of the Rosy Rocks when grace had been given to him to pardon his tormentors. His book had been open in his hands as he sat on some high place and watched his heavenly Father make His sun to shine on the evil and on the good who lived on those spreading plains at the foot of the hills. From those hills he could watch the golden ball rise slowly from the pale far waters of the sea. In the clear air of dawn he could watch the beautiful illumination of the world. Could a lesson so illustrated pass unlearned? Raj had learned it indeed by heart, it was fresh in his heart now.

"I cannot do it," he said as the tavern keeper waited. "It is impossible, for I have been forgiven." But the tavern keeper who, like Marut, felt out of his depth, interrupted kindly if doubtfully, with a "And is that so?" and turned the conversation.

A day or two later, to his unfeigned astonishment, Jothi was arrested, charged with having harboured his notorious kinsman the criminal Raj, and his follower Chotu.

Jothi stared at the Yellow Paper, lifted indignant hands to heaven, and called the powers above to witness that the thing was outrageous. "I gave them each a drink," he said. "Who am I that I should deny it? I talked with Raj under that tree. Is that harbouring?"

Naturally enough, however, that conversation was described as confidential. Two years' rigorous imprisonment was the sentence.

But during the progress of his trial Jothi was bailed out, and he came to the Garden House and was given books and shown all that a few minutes could show, of the comforts and powers of the world to come.

Those few words followed him to the jail. So did Raj's astonishing statements; so did the memory of his fearlessness and curious peace of mind, in spite of his evident weariness of the hunted life.

Jothi appealed; but lost in the District Court. Having the means to do it, he appealed to the High Court. By that Court he was immediately set free.

Rejoicing, grateful for the unforgotten ten minutes' talk just before his conviction, he came straight to the Garden House, and there he told his story.

For, in the providence of God, Jothi had been sent to the jail to which Pon, to whom Raj had given his New Testament, had been sent some months previously when Authority began to scatter any known to be friends of Raj to different jails. And Pon had read his book. For seven months he had read it in silence towards man, then he opened his mouth, for had not Raj said, "When thou hast found Jesus my Saviour, tell others?" And Pon had found Jesus, his heart was full of singing birds. He sang, he laughed, he spoke to all who would listen, nothing could quench him. "Oh, Raj told truth," he said, "Raj told me a splendid truth. There is nothing in all the world like the love of this wonderful Jesus."

"Shut thy mouth," said an irate official one day when Pon's exuberant gladness had become too offensive. But Pon had not the fear of man in him. "All my work will I do faithfully; I will do double if double be given me; but in my free time my mouth is my own, and shut it I will not," he said, let us hope with all due respect, but certainly with decision.

He was frowned upon; ways were found by which he could be harassed; but it was all to the good: untested Christians are feeble folk, and frowns make stronger men than smiles. Pon, however, smiled; he laughed; his laugh was as infectious as his cousin's, and no one could resist Raj when he laughed. This extraordinary happiness in a prisoner who was having rather a hard time attracted other men. One by one, especially any who had known and loved Raj, began to try to find out what had happened to Pon; somehow he managed to let them know, speaking to those to whom he could speak, sending messages to others, "Be happy, do not grumble about your work, do it with joy. Jesus, the Saviour of men, looks upon you with love."

Had such a word ever been passed among men in prison? But who was this Jesus that the knowledge of Him should make Pon so glad? They began to want to know of Him, and Pon lent his precious New Testament to any who could read, and asked the jail schoolmaster to try to find someone outside the walls who would come and teach them about the Lord Jesus Christ, "for there are twenty-seven of us here who are ready to be taught." The schoolmaster found a man, and leave was given to him to teach any who wished to be taught, for the jail rules allow this.

"What is thy desire?" was his first question to Pon.

"I desire baptism," was Pon's answer.

"Hast thou learned the lessons?"

Pon had no idea of what the lessons were, but he answered unabashed, "Kindly show them to me and I will learn them." And the man, being in truth one who had a heart to care for the prisoners, in spite of his formal beginning, taught Pon and the others who had gathered round him; and Raj's New Testament was the gate of life to many a man in that jail.

Jothi was not one of those who openly confessed his faith while he was in jail. But day by day his thoughts ran back to that talk under the banyan tree, to Raj's perplexing, "I have been forgiven," and he learned the prayer his kinsman had quoted, "Forgive us our trespasses." It was not much, but it was enough. He who works without noise of words worked in Jothi then, giving to him the shield of patience under adversity, so that in quietness of spirit he was able to listen and to think. When the happy issue out of all his afflictions was granted, he had made up his mind that the God his kinsman had found, the God who could keep from sin and give grace to forgive and love and forbear, should be his God. He would join the Christian Way. When he went home he found that to his wife, Seetha's cousin, the same desire had come, so they "joined the Way" together.

It was only just one of the many little rills of blessing set flowing by that frequent simple word about forgiving one's enemies. Was it because our Saviour knew that there is nothing that melts the heart of man like love, forgiving, unresentful love, that He said so often in so many various ways, "Ye have heard that it hath been said . . . But I say unto you, Love"?

Such was the crowning of that tavern keeper, who now lives on his land; for tavern keeping, he remarked sagely, is "profitable for this world, but has no concern with that which is to come."

CHAPTER VIII

THREE TIGERS, A BEAR'S CUB AND SEVEN PANTHERS

"He is true, he is true! There is no doubt about it. He is true."

The boy spoke half aloud, and with a kind of triumph. He had been following Raj's fortunes after his escape from jail. He had never seen him in the forest after that escape, often as he had tried to find him; but he had listened to the tales that were told everywhere, listened to what hunters, woodcutters and others said who had companied with him. And now he was sure that what his heart had told him all along was not false, but true.

And the boy who had three times faced a tiger, and knew of nothing on the plains or on the mountains that he feared, realized now that he had been fearing a fear, and that fear was the fall of Raj.

As a little lad, Kumar had idolized Raj ; but then so had all the boys of the village. For Raj was captain of the games ; he had contrived a ball of cloth cleverly tied up with string, it made an excellent football ; and he had formed the boys into a sort of club with a code of its own.

And he had made racing and jumping a sport, with rules that had to be kept. He had turned the rather tame life of the village into something gloriously exciting, and it was all open-air play, above-board, and clean as the wind (this, in a land where games are often otherwise, could never be forgotten). And he was an excellent shot, which to the boy who had never owned a gun, but coveted nothing beyond that joy, completed his captain-hood. Raj could bring down a flying bird. He could hit a rupee at what seemed to Kumar a miraculous distance, and this with a gun, not a rifle. He could—but what was there he could not do ? Nothing, at least nothing that Kumar wanted to do. And Raj was Kumar's captain, his hero.

Then, Kumar never understood how, except that he knew the Yellow Paper story, everything had changed. His hero was a robber.

Kumar had hated to believe it. He came of an honest stock, honest as Raj's own. Raj a robber ? He loathed the thought, and till forced to accept it, he spurned it as too hateful for belief.

For many months he had seen nothing of Raj. He had his own work to do, and it took him up to the forest, where he had many adventures. One day he was asleep in the grass of an open place rather low down on the hill-side. He woke feeling something alive near him, and softly stirring, he looked between the stalks of the eight-foot-high grass and saw the yellow and brown stripes of a tiger. He sprang up and shouted, and the tiger was startled and slipped off.

Again he met a tiger. It was on a path not very far from the village. He walked backwards, keeping his eyes on the great cat. (Did Raj learn his backward walk—his last walk on earth—up there in the forest, as he faced the wild beasts that were so much more merciful than men ?)

At last Kumar reached his village and called up all who had guns, and they went tiger hunting. But the tiger got away.

The third of his three adventures was the most exciting ; for the tiger was standing across the path, and Kumar met him full

face, and for one breathlessmoment they looked into each other's eyes. Then Kumar lifted his arms high, and put all he had into a shout, and the tiger turned and fled.

To the Garden Village, to which one night a tiger came and left his interesting spoor behind in the soft earth but hurt no one, these tales of Kumar's were nothing out of the way. Much more thrilling was his encounter with a bear's cub. He came on it by accident, a little wobbly, quaint, black person. The mother was out, but could not be far away, and a mother bear can claw a man's face into ribbons in a fraction of a second. Kumar hastened swiftly from that nursery.

One day, shortly before Raj was betrayed for the first time, when Kumar was in the wood which climbs the lower slopes of a precipitous mountain, he saw on the rock above Raj and his three men, Undu the Rat, the sagacious Vina, and Chotu. Robber or not, Raj was Raj, and he climbed eagerly to the cave, and felt his heart drawn with the old love, but Raj looked troubled when he came.

Vina stepped out : " Thou hast come at a good hour, we are being hunted and have not been able to get a single pickle of rice. We are starving ; hasten, run to the nearest bazaar and buy rice for us," and he held out a rupee.

But Raj would not allow it. " Shall we get the lad into trouble with the *polees ?* Cannot we bear a little hunger ? It will ruin him if they hear of it. We can wait a while and then go down and climb a palm and get some fruit," he said. And Vina had to yield.

Then Raj drew Kumar away from the rocks, down the steep bank to the little wood out of ear-shot of his men, and he said earnestly :

" Listen, little brother, this is a wretched life ; be not drawn by the glamour of it, it is wretched. I hate it. Keep far away from it, little brother."

And from that hour Kumar loved Raj as if he had been his own. And one day, some weeks later, as he was passing through the valley to which a year afterwards Raj was to go when he escaped from the district jail, Kumar, having crossed the rose-red river bed, was about to pass the little hostel when he saw sitting round the cooking-stones, on which was a pot of rice, seven strong men and an eighth, and the eighth was Raj.

A glance told him who the seven were, police spies sent to track Raj. And now they found him. What would happen ? Kumar drew near fascinated and forgetting to keep out of sight. There was reason for care, as he knew a moment later, for if the

spies connected him with Raj, they certainly would inform against him. And that would mean a false charge, and that meant money which Kumar had not, and almost certain conviction. But forgetting all this, he stood, and stared at the group round the fire.

Raj was talking to them and joking with them. But the seven looked dangerous, like seven panthers round a ram; which of the seven would spring first?

Then one of the seven looked up and saw him.

"Who is that lad?" Kumar heard the suspicion in the man's voice.

"Oh, only a boy from one of the villages," said Raj carelessly as he too glanced up, just as if he had never seen Kumar before in his life, and had not seen him now before the panthers did; and went on joking and talking with the seven.

Kumar understood then that he had better go, and returning a few hours later, found Raj cheerfully dining. The seven panthers had trotted off, Raj said.

Raj's first capture had followed soon after, and his escape; then the second capture, the escape, the himsa. With all the rest of his world Kumar had heard of the Lotus Water, and the visits to the jail, and the Bible read through those months, and of the baptism, and of Raj's resolve never to rob again, and of how that resolve was being kept. And he knew of the refusal to take revenge on any of the betrayers or torturers.

It had seemed too wonderful to be true, and he had feared sometimes lest Raj would break down, and had longed to see him and hear from his own lips that indeed he was a new man; but he had never been able to find him. Now at last he had heard what convinced him. He had heard of the visit to the tavern, of Raj's reply to the question why, when he could do it so easily, he did not touch the men who had injured him, above all those who were even then robbing in his name. And the boy's heart bounded with joy. Raj, who had thought of others and not of himself even in his robbing days, who had warned him off as an elder brother from the path that his own feet trod, whose adorable courage, as Kumar saw it, had saved both himself and the boy who had once played football with him from the bite of the seven panthers, this Raj was what he had known he was. He need never be torn out of his place, he was Kumar's captain still. And to the soul of Kumar, hardly awake as yet, came the first stirring that was to lead on to a surrender to Another, and a worthier, even the Captain of Raj's salvation.

CHAPTER IX

UNDER MORNING AND EVENING STARS

THE Great Bear was standing upside down, with his tail in the air; the Cross was very low; the Pointers were flashing blue as they do not flash when they are higher, Alpha was like a young Sirius; the Scorpion was slowly turning for the plunge over the mountains, as if he thought somewhere there he might overtake the Cross; and Jupiter looked down upon them all, large, bright, and calm. A door in a small house in a hamlet opened quietly, and Raj, with farewells hardly spoken, passed out under the stars. He must be far away before those stars had set.

He had risked much for those two days in that house, and so had his friends; but all life was a gamble then. He was returning now to the mountains, cheered by good food and brotherly kindness. There would be new tales to tell Chotu, from whom he had seldom been parted during those hunted months.

Where he had stayed, in the shut-up room round which the life of the house flowed as usual, there had been talks with people who had arrived casually, loitered about the street, sauntered into the house, and talked to all and sundry. But, as they talked, a nearly closed door would push open a little wider, and there would be one man the fewer with nothing to do in that house. The women, always busy, would glance at one another and smile. Within whistle-call a posse of police carried on its usual activities; the hamlet, with a golden reward in flesh and bones sitting peacefully in the midst, went on likewise as usual, till the heat of a hot March day laid its hand upon them all, and hunters and hunted slept.

But in that room there had been most strange talking. Not a word passed out of the house for many months. Such matters are not mentioned, even between trusted friends, till more than a little water has run under the bridge. But the talk was not forgotten.

It was the time when foreign papers had begun to copy the exciting doings of this brigand who was ravaging the country like any wild beast and yet could not be caught. Descriptions, rather imaginary, showed him sitting on a hill (like Elijah) with a cordon of police drawn round it. The only time when Raj ever sat on a hill small enough to allow a cordon of police to surround it—it was an outcrop of the Great Pyramid of a previous story—he was the observer, not the observed. From that same hill he could look into the police quarters, and doubtless frequently did.

All his other hills were of the nature of mountain chains running for several hundred miles without a break. But the papers carried on bravely, and, after describing the panic-stricken condition of the unfortunate district, would ask pathetically, "How long is this state of things to continue?" So perhaps it was hardly to be wondered at that even the Greater Great became more than a little annoyed.

So indeed did the people, for the frauds had succeeded well. Others followed their example, and there were now several gangs distributed over that corner of British India and the adjoining strip of Native State Territory where Raj had moved with his band. There was always the hope that some of these would be caught red-handed, and every now and then stories escaped of one or another being tracked down; but nothing ever came of it, and there was not much to encourage the men as they talked things out that day. If only Raj could have risen at one leap to the highest, nothing would have mattered to him. "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment; but He that judgeth me is the Lord"; if he had been anywhere near that word, how quickly he would have given himself up and tasted the fulness of joy. But that hard if glorious peak was above him yet. He was only climbing up upon his hands and upon his feet, as a better man than he had climbed a sharp rock long ago. And then, to pull him back, was the fear of what his friends might be called upon to endure. No, he was climbing a very sharp rock, but it was only a lower spur of that ultimate peak. "Not as though I had already attained"; would he ever attain?

Once while he was alone in that small room with a man who dearly loved him, the talk turned to the old fierce thought of revenge. The drive that way was tremendous now. Then, more plainly than he had ever spoken, Raj declared the faith that was in him and the truth that he had learned, and he quoted from St. Matthew's Gospel. He was not wise to dilute the full strength of those great words; he might forget them, as he did for one red moment at the end when the hunt closed round him, but there they stood, and not in cold blood could he disobey them. They commanded him to love his enemies, bless those who cursed, do good to those who hated, pray for those who despitefully used him and persecuted him.

But just and right are the ways of God. "By terrible things in righteousness dost Thou answer us, O God of our salvation." Souls are not saved and purified by sprinkling them with rose-water. Raj had refused his discipline. He had to learn to accept

it. For the true son of the Father there is no escape from the scourge, and that scourge smites sharply, it is not a child's toy whip.

And yet, as that sorely scourged man walked across the plain on his way back to the hills, under the disappearing stars of that hour before the dawn, sweet influences, unbound as the Pleiades', were commanded for his consolation; and from his unfinished story were proceeding even then currents of power that no hand on earth could stay. If he could have crossed the intervening year, and seen that which was to be before those stars swung round again and in that same hour before the dawn made glorious the edges of the hills, two strangely contrasting scenes would have been staged before his astonished eyes.

The first: The house of the seven brothers in the Village of the Herons, that house stripped of its seven men, of whom one—and he was the son over whose life the father swore a binding oath—was dead. He had been shot by the police, who in the twilight had mistaken him for Raj. Another—one of Raj's tormentors, who had held the foot while his cousin hammered the leg—had been slashed about the body by a furious woman, and buried up to the neck in earth. And two others—the chief actors in that fierce play in the village near the sea—had tasted of himsa severe enough to teach them that flesh can feel. All this he would have seen and more. He would have seen his most cruel tormentor flying from his guards who were in hot pursuit. He would have seen him felled by the blow of a big stone, overtaken, seized, dragged back to the jail whose mercy protected him from what many an angry man would willingly have done to him; for the roads were alive with people stirred by the sight of so dramatic a nemesis. "Is it not he who tortured Raj?" was the word that was carried far and wide. "Didst hear the thump of the blows? Didst see his ear hanging half-off? Verily this is the righteous judgment of God."

The second: A lake under the mountains and the sun setting behind those mountains; and on the bank many people standing and rejoicing; he would have heard them singing.

And then he would have seen a man walking into the water, and known him for the man with whom he had talked in a little shut-up room about the Law of the Kingdom: Love, bless, do good, pray.

. . . . . .

That baptism scene was melting into the dusk, and the children of the Garden House were lighting their coloured lanterns that a

river of colour might wind across the plain, and in and out of the little Hindu villages all the way home, when some, whose thoughts were with the men who had walked those fading hills, turned again to look at them, and then, remembering the hills of Paradise, looked up and saw, shining through the thin veil of a pink flush hardly to be called a cloud, bright and white and beautiful, the Evening Star.

PART X

"HEART'S-EASE FOR FLAMING HEART?"

Oh, was there ever a blossom
That bloomed so blithe as she?
On the bitter land, by the salt wet sand,
On the margin of the sea,
Where never a flower but the gorse can blow,
And the dry sea-pink that the mermen sow,
There grows she.

Oh, was there ever a blossom
That bloomed so brave as she,
On the narrow ledge of the mountain's edge
Where the wild-fowl hardly be?
And over her head the Four Seasons go
With a rush of wings when the Storm Kings blow—
There grows she.

No, there was never a blossom
That bloomed so sweet as she,
In the heart that burns, and loves, and learns
Of the Man of Galilee.
And plant her high, or plant her low,
In a bed of fire, or a field of snow,
There grows she.

THE VALLEY OF VISION.

Be constant, O happy soul, be constant and of good courage; for however intolerable thou art to thyself, yet thou wilt be protected, enriched, and beloved by that greatest Good, as if He had nothing else to do than to lead thee to perfection by the highest steps of love; and if thou dost not turn away, but perseverest constantly, without leaving off thy undertaking, know that thou offerest to God the most acceptable sacrifice; so that if this Lord were capable of pain He would find no ease till He had completed this loving union with thy soul.

MIGUEL MOLINOS,
1640–97.

CHAPTER I

WITH HER OWN HANDS LET HER SHOOT US

IT was midnight when a hoarse whisper woke the silence of the Garden House. Two men had come running through the night; they stood by the low verandah and waited.

"He is caught! Chotu got away, but Raj was caught."

" If he has not been killed outright, kill him not," had been the order shouted to the constables who rushed off to bring in the prize. " Bring him alive to me, I say ! I wish to question him about the death of the man sent up with the drug."

" No, he is not to be killed outright. He is to be taken alive to be examined about the death of the Rat."

" No, they will not kill him, it will be himsa, himsa, himsa." The word was hissed, not spoken.

There are moments when every sense is alive and tense. " Drop the wax on his feet. . . . There will be the hammer and nail himsa. . . . Hammer his leg. . . . Without shedding of blood the leg must be broken. . . . I cannot sleep till he is chopped up. . . . He will be a limping cripple "—these and other words flickered past like tongues of flame in the darkness. The men went on talking in that dreadful whisper.

Among those who, in the neighbouring town, heard the order given that Raj, if not killed outright, was to be kept alive and brought for examination about the death of Undu, was an Indian gentleman who had always discounted the tales he heard from time to time about himsa. He had even questioned the existence of himsa at all. He felt unable to believe in anything so remote from the spirit of the age. Himsa belonged to a dark past. But he saw the face of the man who gave that order ; he saw the cruel curl of the lips that snarled back from the teeth like the lips of a savage beast. " It was not a human face, it was inhuman. I know now, I cannot help knowing that this evil is," he said in speaking of it afterwards. And when, on a later day, he ventured to speak in official circles of the diabolical things done not only to men but to women, and was told that they had to be, for it was necessary to prove that Raj had been robbing, and a band had to be found, and there was no other way to extort the required confessions, then, indeed, he had no more to say. He knew that himsa was.

But on that day there was enough to sting the hours. Whatever of common duty filled them, the eyes of the spirit saw the things that (if the tale of the capture were true) might indeed be taking place even then, not far away, but as it were within the very sound of them ; saw Raj roped on the floor at the feet of men free to do almost anything they pleased to his flesh. He would be calling to death to hasten and hurry him out of their hands.

But the tale of the capture was not true. A child named after Raj had small-pox ; word had reached the police that Raj was ill and helpless. The village where the child was had been

surrounded. "Every hen-coop they searched, jabbing their knives in between the wicker-work. But him they found not. For he was not there."

The relief was great, and seeing how great it was, a sympathetic bystander said feelingly, "Do be comforted about the men. Never fear that they will fall alive into the hands of the *polees*, I can tell a comforting word about that"; and he told his comforting word.

Raj always carried poison with him, and he had a huge hideous knife, sharpened on both sides and kept sharp, "as a mighty dagger." If time failed to prop up his gun and shoot himself, or if the poison failed, that knife would not. "Be in no fear for them."

But where would have been the witness in a hateful death of that sort? And what a revelation of their unregenerate ways of thinking.

So Per had no rest till he saw them again, and declared himself plainly. "It would be unfaith," he said, and he turned to Raj. "It would be a kind of cowardice."

But Raj was not convinced. He had heard of an Englishman who had done it to save himself from disgrace. The adventure of death drew him at times, though, attacked, he would fight for his life. What was there in self-killing that worried Per so much? Per, in his fatherly earnest way, explained further. But to Raj, with his very primitive views, it was much ado about nothing. At last, to meet Per half-way, he proposed that Carunia should shoot them. Raj evidently thought she might not be a very good shot, for he added, "Tell her that we will sit perfectly still. With her own hand let her do it." And he argued in all good faith that the Sirkar would not object to that. Would Per ask her?

CHAPTER II

RAJ PAYS A VISIT TO THE DISTRICT HOSPITAL

AND now Raj conceived the hazardous idea of paying a visit to the district hospital where, he had heard, Vina was confined. Vina had refused to join him and Chotu in their escape, but he had not betrayed them, and Raj had a great desire to see Vina again. Vina was not in the old jail. In order to be tried for a crime committed in the Native State, he had been moved to that State, and was confined in a sub-jail there. In a sub-jail the prisoners are kept in cells barred in front, and sometimes on two

sides, so that in passing you see the whole cell; there is not even the privacy of a wild beast's dark corner into which to creep from the eyes that look through the bars. In this cage facing a blank wall, sometimes alone, sometimes with one or two others, a man may be for over a year without anything whatever to do, for the healthier régime of the larger jails does not obtain there. Raj knew that Vina must be eating his heart out behind those bars, and it was worth anything to see him. He was now, he had heard, in the district hospital, where there was a single small cell, which received sick prisoners sent from the jail.

But that whole area was being raked by police, there was not an unwatched road. All this Raj knew. What did it matter? The game was worth the candle.

Now during his very friendly life Raj had acquired a varied collection of friends. He had no difficulty in getting the loan of suitable disguise. His turban was of the finest white muslin edged with gold. His shoulder scarf and his flowing robe were of the same. This white and gold is the perfect dress of the country and Raj would have nothing English, except expensive-looking boots sometimes adopted by Indian gentlemen. Chotu was semi-English, finished off "with a neat tie." But his general air was cosmopolitan, for in his forced travels Chotu had acquired the Malay style, and his dress and manner were reminiscent of foreign parts.

At a little distance, as these interesting strangers passed down the street, a few stragglers belonging to the place might have been observed strolling in the same direction. But there was nothing unusual in that. The road was an open thoroughfare. The Indian gentleman and his attendant arrived in due course at the hospital facing the mountains, clear in every cleft and crag. Followed by his respectful attendant, the visitor walked into the wide compound, and with the utmost composure found his way to the verandah, where, apart from other wards, was the little barred cell. The sentry was negotiated. Yes, the gentleman and his attendant might see the prisoner. Yes, he was Vina of the nefarious Red Tiger's band. Then Vina had a happy time. The long dull months fell back from him in that vivid, racing one half-hour. Reluctantly Raj tore himself away from those bars, and, before too long a visit attracted attention, he and Chotu discreetly retired.

For a while Vina said nothing; but such a joyful episode bursts out in spite of the private admonitions of wisdom. The hospital gradually learned of the visit; there were some game enough to smile. The town learned, the police learned, and

naturally they followed any clue left about ; and in a land which talks so much there are always sure to be some. But Raj was away by that time.

CHAPTER III

AND THE RAILWAY STATION

"COME, let us walk through the streets of the town in full noon" (he named the town), "with our guns over our shoulders like the *polees*."

It was Raj again, and as usual Chotu was ready. They did not rest till this was accomplished and, steeped in delight, their cares for the moment forgotten, they consulted together, "What next ?"

"And next," said Raj at last, after pondering and discarding many attractive proposals, "let it be the railway station."

It was not as mad as it sounds. They had practised to perfection the art of walking, and even sitting, with their guns tucked inside the kind of clothes they wore on such occasions. They could trust themselves to sit on a bench with a policeman. "Come, let us do it," said Raj.

A railway station between trains may be a place of sloth. Rows of corpse-like figures lie along the platform, and someone is sure to curl up on the little wire-caged shelf of the barrier before the booking-office, and only uncurls when you go to buy your ticket, everywhere there hangs the delicious sense of nothing to do and an almost unbroken repose. But when the train comes in, this changes in the flash of a second.

The corpses spring to life. Excitement, steamy, crushy, and hot, pours in, streams out of every carriage door and into every carriage door, jamming badly in the process. Vendors of small goods pierce the ear with cries of "Cahfee !" and the local name of every eatable and drinkable that can be carried or wheeled about. All ages shriek together, sometimes several musical instruments play different tunes at the same time, their drone, rasp, tinkle, and clap-clapping rattles fill all apertures, if such there be, in that solid wall of packed noises. Every now and then a belated straggler will pierce the wall with a yell as the train snorts and appears about to start, but on the whole the effect is noise in the solid, and the spectacle of such earnest people is most edifying to a man straight out of the forest where the indifferent animals move in such other fashion. Raj who loved his kind revelled in it all, as he sat with Chotu on a bench a little

outside the mighty struggle. After all he was human. The human in that mass of confusion drew him to itself.

Presently a tremulous joy was his: "Little brother, look," he said softly, and Chotu thrilled in all the secret places of his soul. One of the station policemen, sauntering quietly past, sat down on the bench with them.

They had other narrow escapes. Once they engaged a motor, or a friend did on their behalf, and went for a joy-ride on their own account. Raj on this occasion was dressed in English dress; a hat, coat, trousers, socks and boots made him glorious in the eyes of his admirers, and in his hands he carried a cane with a silver top. He called at a police station—a passing call—the audacity of it saved him. He was all but caught when the house where he and Chotu were staying was surrounded. But the master of the house was too great a man to be bullied, so a polite request was made to him, to which he as politely assented. He had no objection, "Though, of course," his guests heard him declaim to the search party now assembled, "if you do not find them you will be, as you are well aware, the very laughing-stock of the town." And the search party retired.

Nursing these precious memories, Raj and Chotu returned to the forest.

CHAPTER IV

THE WHISTLING SCHOOLBOY

But a searching time was soon to come upon them. They were being accused of crimes and cruelties that made Raj writhe with shame. Whatever he had been, he had not been cruel. He knew, as many did, who the men were who were personating him. And again and again the desire awoke to end the struggle and have done with it. Once more, wrapped in a silence Chotu feared to break, he fought through. And just then the watch below was redoubled, and there was no way by which anyone could get up with food. They stinted their healthy appetites till they were living on much less than enough, but the day came when there was no food in the cave.

Among the many birds of Indian forests is one which is related to the thrush. Seen among the shadows of the ravine or the wood, he is almost black; but seen flying from boulder to boulder of his river, in bright sunshine there is a gleam of sapphire upon him, for his black feathers are tipped with blue. But the wonder of the bird is his whistle. Waken in the darkness of the wet season half an hour before dawn. There is no sign of dayspring

in the heart of the black forest. The rain comes down in sheets, as it has come for perhaps ten days and nights without stopping. The very air drips. How any bird outside lives, you cannot imagine. Sing? The idea is absurd.

Suddenly, through the rain and the dark, you hear a peculiar leisurely whistle. Heard thus, it is the merriest bravest whistle, albeit so casual, and the whistling schoolboy is the bird's name. Through every kind of weather he whistles his Good morning, and again, through fair weather or foul, his Good night.

Did God listen for another whistling schoolboy that evening?

Just then, passing slowly along a jungle track some distance from the edge of the forest where the men were, was an old and faithful Christian who, living by the proceeds of his land, wandered far and wide, preaching from village to village. He was on his way home, and, as sound carries far in that clear air, he presently heard, coming from somewhere above, the sound of singing.

"*My Redeemer lives. What lack I? Answer me, O my soul.*" It was the first line of a familiar lyric, and the preacher stopped, surprised to hear it there. Then he remembered Raj. He had not known he was anywhere near, but who else would be singing out in the wilds in the twilight? He traced the singer by his song, and found the two hungry men settling down to a foodless, cheerless night, two men, as it seemed, deserted; but Raj was singing with all his might, "What lack I? Answer me, O my soul."

And the preacher heard the tale of the last few days. "They looked famished, but Raj would not give in; he cheered Chotu, he cheered himself, he cheered me," said the old man as he told the happy story to his household. "He even laughed, 'What lack I, tell me, O my soul,' and he all but shouted the first line of his lyric, 'My Redeemer lives, oh, He lives!' and when I wished I had happened to have food with me, he laughed again, and said, as if nothing else was of any importance, 'Buck up, brother, buck up! Our Lord is alive; what does it matter how things are with us?'"

But the preacher could not leave the men hungry. He remembered that he had passed some coco-nut palms lower down, and he went back and got as many nuts as he could carry. The thin creamy pulp was refreshing, and the young water, as the "milk" of a coco-nut is called, revived the weary men.

Heartened exceedingly, Raj burst into song again: "My Redeemer liveth, what lack I? Answer me, O my soul."

Thou who didst give Thy life to redeem my life, Thou dost rise up to be with me,
Thou who hast ascended into heaven, and art the greatest in heaven, Keep me safe, O my Friend.

Thou who didst win the victory over sin, death, hell, and the devil,
Thou who hast cast away the curse, Saviour, High Priest,
How shall I have sorrow any more ? Rejoice, O my soul.

He will grant intense desire, He will grant great light,
He will plead for me in heaven,
He will shelter me from danger, and go forward and lead me into everlasting life,
Which is the door of heaven.

He will comfort me and wipe away my tears,
He will not forsake me at the last,
He will forgive my sins and give me eternal life,
He will lift me into His heavenly Kingdom.

Raj sang it to the end. And the people call it the lyric Raj sang when he hungered.

There is something mystic in joy. Perhaps that is why it is so alluring. Raj had little to say for himself. But he sang. Up and down the countryside that heard him, his songs are remembered. To sing in fair weather is natural enough ; but to sing in glooms that can oppress mind and body alike, to sing on the brink of a foodless night, or at noon on an almost foodless day, with a foodless to-morrow imminent, and the gallows-rope trailing round the next corner, this sort of singing held a wonder in its heart.

Who shall unseal a tomb of song ?
Who a flame of joy prolong ?—
Joy, most nigh the touch of air
That lifts a leaf and is not there.
Evening done, the sun is dead
And all voice is vanished.

Yes, but when the sun is dead, and all voice is vanished, there is a joy that lives on, and sings.

CHAPTER V

IN THE ELEPHANT GRASS

THERE was a day when the Superintendent of Police received accurate information about the movements of Raj and Chotu, and he went himself with a strong posse of police to the upland valley where they had been living for some time. Whenever it

was known that any of these chief hunters were out, there was special prayer in the Garden House for their protection. Their friends knew perfectly that the two men had no wicked intention ; but it was said they had, and an accident might easily happen which would confirm that impression. Was ever a hunt when hunted and hunters were so bound together in one bundle of prayer ? But of this the chief hunters knew nothing, though their subordinates did ; and curious messages would reach the Garden House in recognition thereof.

Presently a vivid account of the hunt that failed appeared in the daily paper. But the paper did not tell all. A messenger chanced to be going up to Raj and Chotu that day " with some slight sustenance," when he found himself followed by this other company, and he mingled with them comfortably. He was glad to see them ; it was good to go up under such safe escort ; he turned on everyone in general a face as blank as a white-washed wall, and he accompanied the party to his very great content through the forest and out on to the grasslands.

The men were in the grass, for they had not time to get away, and could not stir for fear of moving the grass which at that place is about six feet high. Their guns were loaded. They never took their fingers off the triggers. They watched the police file past, and from where Raj was he could have touched the Englishman. When the backs of the search-party were turned to them, still Raj and Chotu watched. Then when opportunity offered, the messenger left the food at the place appointed and returned to the Plains with the police.

" Cold shivers ran up and down my back as I watched them," said the man of the blank-wall face upon his return. " But I knew they would not fire unless the police turned and saw them. Then I think they would have fired in the air and dashed off."

" Could they have escaped ? "

" I am not sure. They might have. If they had, they would have led the police a fine dance through the elephant grass all over the fells. Tired men would the police have been that night. As it was they had to carry the white man back. But it was a close thing. And it was not the first time Raj was within a hand's clasp of that white man, he met him once full face——" But the story broke off, it was too familiar to tell. " And Raj is a dangerous criminal, out to kill, so they say."

So they said, indeed, and many were the private tunes played to that same note. Once about that time, a Government Official who did not own a typewriter sent a long document to the Garden House, asking that it might be typed for him. It was a petition

to Government for increase of pay, on the ground that the writer had to frequent places where the Red Tiger might possibly be; he therefore walked in danger of death, and deserved increase of pay, for the aforesaid Tiger killed as it were for mere wantonness.

One day while the air was electric with new tales of crime, the tension was relieved by a joyful incident. The towns and villages, worried by the continual presence of police, and threatened with that limb of Satan, as a candid official called the punitive police, threw care to the winds and laughed.

For the police of the Native State and of British India squabbled violently, audibly, and visibly, each accusing the other of "hiding Raj in the forest, robbing in his name and bagging the loot."

And another day the villages were diverted by a peep-show. It was a curious affair, contrived out of a biscuit-tin and a few bits of glass. But when you looked you saw the Red Tiger stretched on the bed in the sub-jail hospital, and Carunia standing beside him. The very rumour of its coming drew crowds; its advent charmed coppers out of queer little knotted handkerchiefs and scarves; and the adventurous proprietor waxed fat. Such things did greatly lighten the rigours of the time for the people, who were beginning to weary of perpetual alarms.

CHAPTER VI

THE WHISTLING SCHOOLBOY AGAIN

AMONG the hills to the south is a peak that curves like the hooked bill of a bird. The Dæmon's Peak, the people call it. To reach it you travel over a wind-swept upland, whence you look across many coloured miles to the sea.

Raj had the eyes of a hawk. His hunters declared that his friends had given him field-glasses. But his Maker, and no other, was responsible for those hawk's eyes. Now, going up to the Peak, he turned and stood at gaze, and saw, like a child's toy farm-yard on a red table-cloth, the Garden Village with its many trees set on the red sand of the Plains. Under one of those roofs were his three children. What he endured, as time after time he saw that patch of green with the roofs of cottages showing through, no man may say. It was part of the discipline of his God.

But that was a day of hot pursuit. A clue had been found by his hunters. The instinct of the hunted had warned him, "We must go to the Dæmon's Peak," he had said, "we shall shake them off if we go there." And the faithful Chotu had followed.

So, on that early morning as the clouds that herald the south-west monsoon rolled up from the sea, and lay, like soft waves, round the base of the hills, shining, snowy-white, they skirted the forest-covered mountain, by way of those wide uplands where all the winds of heaven play, and presently crossing by some unmarked border, found themselves in the Native State to which the Dæmon's Peak belongs. Once there, they were, for the moment, safe.

They had only one anxiety, pressing enough, but for that day negligible, and Raj never borrowed trouble, or as his speech put it, beckoned to Saturn, the god of ill-luck, to come before his time. This anxiety was rice.

For they had been forced to fly without letting any of their friends know whither they were going. It was hard enough to get supplies to places known. How could anything possibly reach them on the Dæmon's Peak when no one knew that they were there? They had nothing with them but a little bundle of the rather bulky grain. Rice is not like wheat or oatmeal; a large quantity is required for a meal. Without its accustomed condiments it is sorry stuff, and, above all, without salt it is insipid as the white of an egg. And they had not even salt.

Carefully they counted out the handfuls of rice. They might, almost certainly would, find game on the mountain, but rice was required if they were to keep fit. They had hardly enough for two days. There were no crows to preach faith—they had not found their way to the Dæmon's Peak. Would ever one of their human brothers find his way? There were reasons why it was better not to go down either side of that mountain for several days to come.

It was the time of the year when the hills stand in, as it were, conscious joy. For before the coming of the south-west monsoon, and after the first showers that wash the leaves that were clean enough before, you may see magical things: a sky of faint green deepening to something like the feathers of yellow gold of the flying birds of the psalm, and against this yellow gold, mountains of the palest gold that can be called gold at all; and where the precipices are wet after the last shower, they shine like shredded crystal. Sometimes when the vapours ascend from the valleys, or drift on a light wind borne from the Indian Ocean, these vapours, golden too, are so disposed that it is as though the pale-gold and crystal mountains were cut sheer off, or rose, like dreams, from a sleeping golden sea. Welcomed into that world that evening, the two men slept in peace in a cave near a peaceful river, their to-morrow left in the folded hand of God.

And on that same evening, to a sambhur-hunter some eight or nine hours' walk distant in British India, came the thought that it would be good to get a couple of days' shooting over Native State Territory before the approaching rains made it impossible. And as his mother measured out the required rice for two men for five days and tied it up in a cloth with smaller bundles of spices and, of course, salt, the young hunter considered the tangle of mountains near by and far off, and fixed on the Dæmon's Peak ; there was good hunting always on that hill.

So, taking a lad with him to carry the food and cooking-pots, he started off in the small hours of the morning and reached the Peak at about noon.

But the Peak is a considerable hill, and it is covered with forest and thickets, except where it opens in grass. Set a man to find two men hidden somewhere on such a hill, and the search for the needle in the haystack appears a trivial task. And the hunter did not know that he was sent there to find anyone.

But, as so often before in this story, we come upon what we cannot explain. We only know that the young hunter was directed to choose, out of all the many ravines on that mountain, the one which led to the valley where Raj and Chotu were cooking almost their last handful of rice. He was led as the preacher was led to the cave when the whistling schoolboy was heartening a hungry supper-hour with song. All that young hunter knows is that, as he climbed, he heard a man singing. For cheery-hearted Raj, having escaped his pursuers, was singing with his usual abandon to the spirit of song. So his voice carried for at least half a mile, and much excited the young hunter tracked his unexpected quarry by the sound.

Not till Raj had been for seven good months safe on another Mountain with a New Song in his mouth was this story told.

" I heard a man's voice singing. I could hardly believe it at first, I thought we were alone on the mountain that day ; but I tracked the way to him by the sound, and there I saw him, Yes, Raj; Raj and Chotu, under a big rock by the river."

" What was he singing ? "

The hunter thought for a moment, then repeated the first line. It was easy to retrieve the song :

> He is the heavenly One, He the incorruptible,
> He is the loving Son, the alone true Christ,
> Praise Jesus, O my soul, praise Jesus !
>
> Giver of heaven, Giver of earth,
> The beautiful King, the adorably Lovely,
> Praise Jesus, O my soul, praise Jesus

Performer and Perfecter of all my thoughts,
Happiness incarnate in heaven and in earth,
Praise Jesus, O my soul, praise Jesus!

The picture was vivid as the hunter showed it. The bright river, the ferns between the stones and on the banks; a yellow flower like a lighted candle, standing up among dark leaves; Chotu with his little pot on the fire by the rock; Raj near by, with his book in his hands, singing to hearten Chotu and himself.

The hunter shared his store of provisions, and his salt, welcome salt.

In all the stories told in the papers Raj's knapsack figured. With his knapsack on his back the daring robber appeared before the startled wedding-guests, with his knapsack on his back he broke into peaceful dwellings. The meal over, the hunter saw Raj open that knapsack. Inside it was his little goat-skin bag, and from the bag he took his books and a pencil, for he never read without a pencil and he marked "that he might find it again" anything that struck him as vital. The hunter could not remember what he read that day, but not till his last hour will he forget what he sang.

Then Per, who had been listening to this, said suddenly, "I would go to the King, if I could, and tell him the truth." For his heart was sore. The truth was still being held down, and Untruth had lately been officially reaffirmed. But Per was slowly recovering from another illness. The travail of that year had told hardly upon him, and he looked more like a man on his way to the King of kings than one who must endure again the bluster of the storm.

"What does it matter?" said Carunia. "It is only the talk of the little rooms of earth." And Per lay back comforted.

CHAPTER VII

CARRY HIM OFF

"CARRY him off, we shall be blind, carry him off."

The words were hardly spoken, they were merely murmured, and the man who spoke them, a Public Servant, stooped over some small matter of the Ford, and appeared to be talking about nothing more important than a screw or a strap.

Many a man spoke that word; for the Ford appeared to them as a kind and opportune providence—could Raj not be tucked up under a rug? And they could never have understood that,

even if the car could count on passing, unsearched, all the toll-gates ordered to watch it, a curious constraint lay on its owners so far as its use was concerned. For the District Superintendent of Police had licensed that car.

The men on the roads were not alone in their urgings.

Letters came from many countries wishing that Raj should escape. Some suggested helpfully that he should go to another forest and live by hunting and selling game—as if the forests were not, every foot of them, Government property, and as if Government had not eyes all over India. And some said, "Let him be a Christian sadhu and go about preaching the Gospel"—as if sadhus were not more or less suspect; it is a tempting disguise. And besides, to be frank, Raj was no sadhu. The true sadhu walks on planes as yet untrodden by this man who was still so incorrigibly boy.

But Carunia had no business to touch him at all, except for spiritual reasons. Once off that ground, she had no manner of right to come near him. Everywhere else he was Law's, not hers. But on that ground he was hers, and she had rights that laughed at Law; no frown could warn her off that field where two hosts contended for him. She was on the side of the angels. What would most quickly set him on the highest rock? That was the questions of questions from the first day to the last.

But Raj saw it like this: To surrender meant one of two things, either a fair trial with witnesses to prove an alibi, or an unfair trial with no witnesses.

To summon such witnesses meant to ruin them. They would be criminals in the eye of the Law.

So they could not be summoned.

So there could be no fair trial.

So conviction was certain, and that meant imprisonment for life, or the gallows.

They were up against what seemed to them impossible. "We must be fortified for it," Raj had said, when conditions were much less serious.

But to effect that they had to be somewhere where they could be taught. No part of their language area would be safe for more than a month or two, and was there a corner of the earth where that tongue was spoken which could not be combed out to find them if suspicion turned thither? Why don't you help them to escape? The airy question overlooked a great many difficult details. To begin with there was one which affected all the others. The Garden House naturally was watched. Spies lived in its pocket. A venerable guest was amused to find himself escorted

from the door of that house to his own some hundreds of miles away. Another, as innocent as a kitten of all designs upon Raj, was stalked and tracked and shadowed in a fashion that must have been expensive. However simple it may sound in a story-book, in plain life this kind of endeavour is about as simple as walking through a barbed wire entanglement.

But all this was as nothing in comparison with the root question, Would it be right to do it at all? It is doubt that tortures, not danger. Once be sure and nothing matters. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Again and again Raj's friends fell back on that, and asked for the single eye, and yet no light came.

"Let my mother decide for me," said Raj with filial faith. He had no idea of what he was asking. It was the hardest thing that was asked of her through those hard months. If only he could die; but that seemed to be the last thing Raj could do. A sinless accident, a slip on some high precipice or a swift clean death in the foaming waters, might she pray for such an end? Or might she pray to be guided so to direct his flight that he would be able to reach some place where he could be taught and fortified, to use his own word, so that he would return and surrender, bringing Chotu, who would have followed him to hell and surely would follow him to heaven?

One evening during this time of tension, the friend who had baptized Raj in the district jail came to the Garden House to baptize the first group of men won through Raj's witness. These men had suffered and were still to suffer for their faith. Not one of them stood to gain a single anna by his confession, rather they would certainly lose. Each would be a marked man henceforth, a target for those who sit in secret places and make ready their arrows upon the string that they may privily shoot at the upright of heart. And so, because there was reality in that baptism, the hour was full of a solemn happiness. Back went the thoughts of all who stood by that waterside to the baptism in the jail. How little the visible witnesses who stood round that bed in the hospital knew that they were witnessing the founding of a church. Were the angels who were there that day here by the waterside? How much more they must know than we do yet of the wonderful counsels of God.

But through that hour by the water under the hills the uncertainty that hung about Raj and Chotu's affairs was like a thorn run into living flesh. "If I help you to escape," had been Carunia's last message, "it will only be that you may return. And after you are safely out of the country I shall tell the Sirkar

what I have done." For she could not bear to think of Raj's even wanting her to walk in any false way. And she had explained as clearly as she could that no true foundation for lasting peace could be found but in obedience. All other foundation would prove but shifting sand. To this he had answered again, "My mother, choose for me." And here she was, unable to choose, because she could not clearly see what was right to do. She did not even know what to pray for as she ought. And this indeed was a stabbing thorn.

Later, the baptism over, the family returned to the Garden House and gathered for evening prayers.

There was nothing startling in the reader. His voice was quiet as the fall of snow as he read familiar words from the eighth chapter of Romans:

"We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Then, in a moment, and for ever, was the plucking out of that painful thorn.

And shortly afterwards Raj acted on his own account. He knew how to find his way to those who were ready to help him. For, in spite of all that was done to kill confidence in him, there were many who could not get rid of the sense that somehow injustice had been done, and that he ought to be encouraged to make a new start. It was astonishing how many were prepared to take big risks for his sake; but an experience like this tests the quality of the gold of human nature and discovers its glorious loyalties. To know what sheer pluck is, stand with your back to the wall with never a hope of help. Then you see them, the comrades that count. Friendships that will endure while time lasts, and after, were formed in those months. British and Indian came forward then, and showed themselves for what they were. It was an enriching time.

But the days that followed Raj's decision were strangely dual in feeling. There was peace, and yet there was also a most tense winding up of the strings of the inner man. On the road which Raj must take the hills parted abruptly and left some barren miles of plain. This gap had to be crossed. What if any hint of Raj's intention had got out, and that gap were being watched? How bare it appeared to the imagination, swept bare as a board, laid open under glaring skies. Raj would take it by night doubtless, but still no one could be sure. Raj was unexpected in his ways. And one slip would give away everything.

Then rumours began to run about. It was said that Raj and Chotu had been decoyed to a place to the north (could it be the

gap ?) and that there they were to be netted. Raj was travelling in disguise. He was a medicine-man with a bundle of herbs and a medicine book in the vernacular. He wore a long white coat and had dark spectacles, and other un-Rajlike paraphernalia. Chotu was his chela, his humble disciple carrying his little bundle. But would Chotu always subdue his lordly young airs, and would Raj always remember to bend low like a decrepit old man and so disguise his limp ? Above all, what about their guns ? In vain they had been reminded that doctors do not carry guns. They would not leave those dangerous toys behind till they they were well out of range of the police of their own province. " We know how to walk with them under our clothes," was all they would say. But how stoop like a proper old man with a gun tucked under your clothes ? And what if they were suspected and searched ? Let no one who wants an easy life have to do with such as Raj. His last remark was most disquieting. He wanted to label his gun, " With the Red Tiger's salaams," and drop it somewhere near a police station. And who could be sure that he would not hang about to enjoy the finding thereof ? " They will pounce on it," he had said with the utmost relish, " and carry it off ' for identification.' " And it was only too evident that Raj wanted to be there to see that little ceremony.

Meanwhile the man appointed to meet them at a place several days' journey north returned, having seen nothing of them. And a newspaper paragraph glanced at them with a much too certain glance, " their arrest was momentarily expected."

Some days of absolute silence passed. Each silent day was a boon. The men were safe so far. If they had been caught, the news would have reached the Garden House before even the telegraphic account of the event had time to get into the papers.

And then, at last, with the unhurried leisure of an ordinary message, came the word, " They are back among the southern hills."

It was true. Presently Raj told all about it. " We reached the grey crag and looked over. There were Reserve Police spread all about. We therefore assuredly gathered that it was not ordained that we should go further at this time. Directed by this inauspicious omen we returned. But there were watchers, so we departed to another place where we have been since then in quietness."

Inauspicious omen ; it was a word that could not be gainsaid. To ignore such a sign from heaven would have been to walk into a snare ; " in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird."

And in a sense it was a profound relief. The thought of escape

had been hateful, such a poor second best. And even at that it was packed with perils. Raj could act policeman for an hour or two and visit a district hospital under the eye of the world. But he was not a man to play a part for long. He was too frank, too careless, too fond of fatal jokes. Sooner or later, if he delayed that which ought to be done, he would feel a tap on his arm, and turn and look into cold eyes and hear his old name spoken and know himself in the hands of the Law that never can forget. Day by day, be the years never so many, every morning must see the newspaper opened with a quick clutch of fear.

Presently another word came from Raj. "I am sick of living the life of a jackal, but I have been thinking over things. There are marks upon me that would betray me wherever I was, and, if I were found, there would be trouble for all who helped me. There are risks to them at every point" (there certainly were, and to link up any kind of chain of helpers was extraordinarily difficult, because posted letters were not safe, and because of the uncertainties that compassed Raj's path; no one could be sure he would be able to keep to anything arranged). "Chotu is different," he continued, "he could get off easily, but any day the humped-up bone in my leg might betray me. No man shall suffer for my sake."

Poor Raj, many a man was to suffer for his sake, was even then suffering, there seemed no way out of that. As for Chotu, he refused to leave Raj.

But surrender was not in Raj's thought. "If I were dead, then surely my people would be left in peace. Why is it so wrong to end one's life, if it would give peace to others?" So that wretched question was up again. And for a while there was a tossing on a tumbled sea of miserable fears. But the sea calmed.

And the rain came on, and the bottles of heaven were poured out on the hills, for streaming days and nights. How chilly it must have been up there, how clammy the air, in those soaking caves by the swirling yeasty rivers. It was indeed so damp and doleful that Raj and Chotu made themselves a little hut of grass. They kept their books in a specially thatched nook in the roof, and creeping in through the low door were for the time safe. For they knew how to fold the grass step by step as they moved through it, turning it back to its old position as they passed, and in those miles of grass they were as safe as a white hare on a snow-field. But down on the Plains there were some who looked up into the gloomy mountains and thought of the story of St. Peter at Rome, and their hearts were filled with longing over the two lost up there in those clouds.

THE SCENE OF RAJ'S DEATH

As his pursuers drew near, he sprang on a bank of red earth (where the figure in white is seen standing) and flung away his gun, thus dying without a weapon in his hand.

THE LAKE OF THE REEDS

Per, Raj's devoted friend and teacher, is sitting on the bank to the left.

"For on the eve of his martyrdom, as it is said, the friends of the apostle obtained the means for his escape. They pleaded the desolation of the Church. He may have remembered his deliverance by the angel from Herod's prison. And so he yielded to their prayers. The city was now left and he was hastening along the Appian Way, when the Lord met him. "Lord, whither goest Thou?" was his one eager question: and the reply followed, "I go to Rome to be crucified again for thee."

"Next morning the prisoner was found by the keepers in his cell."

If that might be, if only that might be, who would not be content?

CHAPTER VIII

NO MOONLIGHT NOR STARLIGHT

"May I say you have suggested this?"

It was asking a great deal to expect an answer in the affirmative. But this will not be understood in a land where a man's reputation is not made or marred by whispers in secret places. Carunia knew she was asking a hard thing; but she was weary of black threads in dark rooms, and she knew the calibre of the man to whom she spoke. There was no soft iron there. He was steel.

"Yes, I believe I am doing right. You may certainly say that I asked you."

"But I can promise nothing. They say they would rather die than come in. I can only try."

"Try then. It's worth it."

The man who spoke was the civilian mentioned before, by whose insight and courage what might have been a caste riot was averted, the man who brought peace to the part of the district where for months there had been none. He wanted Carunia to meet the two men if possible.

Quietly then, three who could be trusted, watched to give the message. It was dangerous at that time to be seen near the hills. Two were seriously threatened, and fell out alarmed. So there was only Per left, Per who never failed.

"I regret to say he is still committing crimes," was the next official word that reached the house, it was from the police officer then in charge. "If a right man is sent I am sure he could be reached in no time, as he is not far from us." And the places which Raj was said to be haunting were named. This letter was not cheering: "He is still committing crimes." The officer who

wrote it had not, of course, been asked to move any of the patrols in order to give Carunia a better chance to reach the men. But when a dacoity occurred in the Village of the Temple, close by the Garden Village, the people everywhere heard that it had happened because at Carunia's request the patrols had been removed. It was impossible not to recall the letter with its obvious implication that told of the first robbery. "It isn't cricket," wrote somebody on hearing of it. It certainly was not. Christina's boy Samuel spoke a feeling word that day:

"Why, if ever I get out there again, I think I shall prize light and good way better than ever I did in all my life."

It was a comfort to remember that Greatheart the Guide said then, "We shall be out by and by."

But many such words came like strong friends through those days: "Why should I start at the plough of my Lord that maketh deep furrows on my soul? I know that He is no idle husbandman: He purposeth a crop. Angry clay's wind shall shake none of Christ's corn. He will gather in all His wheat into His barn. Believe under a cloud, and wait for Him when there is no moonlight nor starlight." "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised." And yet there was another side to it all: Nothing but the Infinite Pity is sufficient for the infinite pathos of human life."

PART XI

Then answered the Lord to the cry of His world,
" Shall I take away pain,
And with it the power of the soul to endure,
Made strong by the strain ?
Shall I take away pity that knits heart to heart ?
And sacrifice high ?
Will ye lose all your heroes that lift from the fire
White brows to the sky ?
Shall I take away love that redeems with a price,
And smiles at its loss ?
Can ye spare from your lives that would climb unto Mine,
The Christ on the Cross ? "

JULIA LEARNED

CHAPTER I

THE MEETING AND THE PARTING

IT was night on the edge of the forest. Clouds had covered the stars and there was no moon, but even so the least gleam of white might have led to trouble to her guides; so Carunia stained her hands and face and feet, and, wrapped in a dark sari, waited.

" There will be a sign soon." The words came like a breath from a shadow on the outer wall of the little room where she waited. For an hour the shadow stood and did not stir, then from the jungle outside came a low call like the call of a night bird; a soft whistle answered. " They are near," breathed the shadow, and a silent guide led Carunia through ways unknown to her, till, like a patch of denser darkness in the darkness, she saw the two men.

They were sitting low on the grass together, seen and yet hardly seen, soft shapes in the soft darkness, like two lorises curled up together. They rose, and in a moment Raj had Carunia's hands in his, and was fondling them with the eager touch of a loving child.

After a little it was possible to talk, and Raj asked about his children, and they told bit by bit of their hunted lives, of the fearful temptation to give way, of the keeping that had withheld them, of the wonderful succour given at special times of need,

such as after the last killing that had been charged to them. "And when we were there," they named a house far away from the Plains, "they gave us much comfort, talking with us as if indeed we were human, and not ravening beasts. We were faint and weary when we went, and they gave us soap, so that soon we were clean and refreshed; and coffee and bread they gave us, and a Bible, for we had lost ours; and this coat was given" (here Chotu directed Carunia's hand to feel the texture of the coat), "such a good coat; was it not a deed of love? Just then we were getting sorely discouraged, for so many had begun to believe that we had done wrong, and all the wrongs done to us were as of no account, and we began to feel, Is it fair? If we had done as they say we did, would it have been so very wicked? Was not my leg broken by himsa?" And Raj drew Carunia's hand down gently, till she felt the protruding bone, and understood the biting truth of the word that followed, "At every sight of it the temptation sprang out, and shouted, 'Return the wrong by wrong!' But this hardness was softened by their kindness and by their faith in us. Oh, it was grief to leave that place." And they told of the poisoned egg.

They told of strong temptation to give way and take revenge when first the robberies began. "It seemed as though to forgive were of no avail, they thought me weak," said Raj. "'His religion has made him a weakling, we need not fear him now'—that was their thought. And when the brothers whom I had forgiven for the himsa took to robbing in my name, then was I mightily tempted." And they told of how the dress they had adopted had been copied, and of the guns supplied; and of how sometimes a man would carry a palm stem blackened, which in the dark looked like a gun. They named the members of the gang; the leaders, they said, were the brothers who had betrayed them. "We passed their houses lately in the Village of the Herons; our feet dragged as we passed. But indeed we did not wish to sin, so we passed on and did nothing."

And they told of the comfort and the sense of their God's approval when the false friend returned part of what he had held from them. They had still some of that money, they said, which they had turned into jewels as they were easier to carry than silver rupees.

They told of their escape: "We had lost heart," they said. They told of their sorrow when they realised their folly. They told, too, of the times they had tried to come in, of the means taken to prevent that kind of surrender by which the police reward would have been lost; and of the deep discouragement

and fear that seized them, when they had proof of the endeavour to ruin their reputation among the people whom they loved and who loved them. "To make the people think ill of us, this stabbed us. But even so they would not betray us. Oh, are they not a loyal people? We have friends in every town, of every caste." And they told of the help given to them, speaking gratefully of the courage that risked so much to help them. "But we knew that sometimes it was necessary for our helpers to let us be blamed by causing it to appear that we had demanded things from them. What mattered it? If the flood goes over the head, what does it matter if it be a foot deep or a fathom? Oh, the calamitous flood! We were ruined already." And they told in little snatches of sentence, of those heart-broken hours when the things their souls refused to touch became their sorrowful meat.

They told, too, of their perplexity about the question as to which would do less harm to their people, their coming in and the starting of a long series of trials in Court—("It is said that I am leading a band. Must not the band, somehow or other, be found?")—or their staying out till their death appeased the Powers—("It may be they will drop the matter then.")

But they had by now quite given up all thoughts of surrender—"Our final thought is this: It would be better to die, for then surely the *police* will be satisfied and leave our friends in peace." (It never occurred to Raj or to Carunia either that he was thinking too generously.) Nothing could lead them back to where they had been before this black stream of crimes, committed in their name, had begun to flow.

"It will all come out in time," said Raj, with that quiet patience which had struck Carunia with wonder all through this talk.

For there seemed to be no hardness in him, only a bitter pain that yet in some strange way contained sweetness. In India, when plantains are slow in ripening, a sharp rod is thrust up into the stem which bears the fruit, and the hundred or more plantains on that stem ripen quickly. The sharp rod of this affliction that had been thrust into the heart of Raj, had set free the flow of sweet juices. There was a ripening of the fruit. But there was another side to such matters. Can anyone who loves justice think unmoved of what those two men endured, as those crimes were heaped upon them? "We had hoped the truth would come out, but it is not to be. Not while we live; but one day it will all come out."

They told a little tale that showed their abysmal ignorance even yet of the ways of the Law. When the Governor of the

Province had come to the district to open a new railway, they had decided to come out boldly, walk through the crowds, and throw themselves at his feet. He would put them in prison, of course, but it would be he himself who put them there. All would be well. It was the old East, the very heart of the East, that which sees in its supreme Ruler something divine.

Of this forlorn hope Carunia had heard, and she would have given much to further it; they had abandoned it in favour of another of which she heard now for the first time.

They got paper and ink, they said, and a good envelope, and with infinite labour they wrote a statement of their matters to the Governor, telling the truth, beseeching for an inquiry of a new kind, but after the old fashion, direct, personal, the one kind of justice this older India understands. They were ready to come down and give themselves up to such an inquiry. They would come on the signed word of the Great.

They told of the posting of that letter and of their waiting for an answer, and they told it with such vivid, living, human little touches that Carunia found herself asking, "And did an answer come?"

They spoke of their hunters. They knew their whereabouts and movements, and the character of each, and their remarks were both shrewd and kindly: "He, ah he? We trust him not," and they named the sum which had bought that man, and the number of times they had met him. "But the purchase only holds good for a certain time and within a certain area. He has now been transferred. And he?" (they named another) "We trust him not. He would buy you one day and sell you the next. But So-and-so, we trust; he is a fair hunter, he does his duty honestly; he will catch us if he can." And they told of "the brave young Englishman on the big horse," as they called him, who had won their admiration by his pluck in hunting them among the lanes in the twilight. They used to watch him, they said, and track him; "he was easily tracked. He used to lie in wait for us. It was the time when they had begun to say we would shoot even an Englishman. But he was not afraid. Oh yes, we liked him." And they spoke of their chief hunter who, before he was exasperated by the trouble their escape had given him, had spoken to them as man to men. "He is angry now and bitter, believing all he is told. He was told once we would shoot him if we had the chance. But would we hurt a hair of his head?" And they told of that day when he had been within a hand's grasp in the elephant grass. (How different the points of view of hunter and hunted.) And of many such things they told, and

especially of that provoking but delightful hour when they came down to watch for the men on the motor-bus. "Oh, how we wanted to run forward when we saw your car! We saw its red flag. We saw you, we all but risked it. Then we remembered your word that we might not come to see you, unless we were willing to surrender." And they broke off to bless with a most vigorous and masculine blessing the official who had given leave for this one meeting.

"But that leave was only given in the hope that I could persuade you to end the trouble you are giving to the Sirkar."

They were silent; then earnestly, piteously, they tried to explain why they chose death rather than surrender.

"But with Jesus beside you through it all?"

"But will He not be with us in a death in the open air?"

After this there was talk of what was heaviest on Carunia's heart. "If only I heard that thou hadst died without a weapon in thy hand, I could bear it," she said to Raj, and she spoke of the death of our Lord, and Raj caught her hand in his and said, "O our mother, do not fear for us. Will God forsake us?"

But indeed she did fear, for she knew the power of flesh outraged, knew that a promise not to shoot at that last hour would be swept as a straw on the waves of an awful elemental passion; so for a minute or two she could not speak, but only held his hands and cried in silence to her God to save those hands from blood-guiltiness.

Then the watchers grew anxious. It was time to part. So they all stood up together, and Raj repeated his simple creed: "I must not rob; though we starve to death we must not rob. I must not avenge myself, I must forgive. I have been forgiven, must I not forgive?" And he repeated the first few verses of the 27th Psalm (never had they sounded more vital than that night in that wild place); and Chotu said the 23rd Psalm, and they all three knelt for one more minute, and prayed together for the last time. "O Lord, Saviour of men, let happen what may, but keep them from sin." It was her last word with them, and Raj stooped and kissed her hands. Then they parted.

CHAPTER II

THE BLUE TIME IN THE FOREST

It was the blue time in the forest. The memecylon, the blue-ball tree, is so happy that he cannot content himself with the usual clusters of flowers at the end of budding twigs; he breaks

out all over his stem in soft little balls of blue. And this lovely tree made a mist of blue here and there in the green that bordered the banks of the streams. And down on the ground, in clumps of blue, was crossandra, who is often orange, but can be blue when she likes. And many another blue thing, purple and lilac and lavender grew there too, in fringes and spikes and plumy tufts, and mats spread on the grass. And big black and blue butterflies sailed slowly over the water, alighting on a boulder or even on a man if he stood quiet, mistaking him for a tree, and blue-green dragon-flies darted and wheeled like elfin aeroplanes each with his blue-flashing jewel. And blue-birds, their tiny Prussian-blue babies now beginning to turn azure, sat in little fluffy rows on the same branch, like a blue edition of the ten little nigger boys; and overhead the sky was always one transparency of blue.

And to Raj, who had brooded for months over a Bible in which every verse that spoke of the love of God was underlined in blue, this general blueness spoke in a hundred ways, till, constrained by Love eternal, he began to try humbly, as he had tried in the jail before his fall, to help others to taste the love that meant everything to him.

One morning, up from the lowlands came the sound of a flute. The tune was the lilting call the kine know and follow in the evenings. Pushing their horned heads through the undergrowth and the high grass, they come out in their hundreds, and stream down the path after the boy with the flute. But now it was morning and the cattle brought up for pasture were straying where they would, and the boy who played the flute played for his own pleasure.

Soon he came into view, a swarthy lad, lithe and merry-eyed. With him were half a dozen others, all of them men of the open air, bronzed by the sun and wind. Raj beckoned to them to come near, and they squatted about him as he sat on a rock with his gun leaning against the rock behind him, and his bag of books beside him.

"Do you know why we are not robbing?" The men looked at him with friendly eyes, and they shook their heads. They knew enough of Raj to know it was not because he was afraid. They had often wondered among themselves at this sudden change; but not one of them knew its cause. Of the mighty energies of the Spirit of Life they were as ignorant as the cattle they tended.

"Speak, O brother, tell it."

And Raj told that amazing story, told of the Holy One who walked our dusty roads, and climbed our hills, and noticed the

sky changing for rain and fair weather, and the way the flowers grew, and the birds and beasts behaved, and healed the sick—Oh, that He were back again, so many are sick now—and loved poor people, and in the end gave His life for love of them. And he told in what manner it was given, told the story that had gripped him when he first heard it by the Lotus Water, showed the Three Crosses: Christ crucified between two thieves.

"It is He who keeps us," said Raj, "for He rose. Death could not hold Him. And He is alive for ever and ever."

The revelation concerning life over which death has no power was much in his mind at that time. Soon after the herds left, the uplands became unsafe; so he and Chotu went to the Valley of the Seven Caves, where they had been during the week of the first robbery, and, hearing this, Gir went up.

"Listen," said Raj to Gir, who had found him reading in his cave. "Listen, I have been reading a mighty story," and he began to read aloud in the half-chant of his race.

"'Jesus saith unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.' Gir, it means this. The *polees* will kill me, I shall be dead. My body will be dead; but I shall be alive. I shall be alive with God. *Though I be dead, yet shall I live.*"

The wonder of it seized him again. He sat looking at Gir who did not speak. "Gir, Gir," he said, "*I shall be alive; though I be dead, yet I shall live.*"

The next time Gir went up he told Raj of how the charge was being worked up against him for the Village of the Temple dacoity. Raj was depressed. But, after a few minutes, he opened his New Testament at the place where he had been reading last.

"And He put forth His hand and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him."

His face cleared as he read it, and his eyes brightened. "Gir," he said, "my leprosy is healed. 'He put forth His hand and touched him saying, I will; be thou clean.'" And then with emphasis Raj continued to the end of the verse. "*And immediately the leprosy departed from him.*" Gir knew what he meant and why those words held strong consolation that day. And he knew, as he had not known before, that when the little lamps of earth are covered over, and no human help can be, the love of the Lord is there. And the love of the Lord passeth all things for illumination.

CHAPTER III

WILL THEY NEVER HEAR? WILL THEY NEVER KNOW?

BUT, blue and glad though the woods were, Raj had his very dark hours when he could see no light anywhere all round him and forgot to look up. On one such day he sat on a high place looking down upon the Plain and fretting over the things that were happening there. Per was sitting by him, and it seemed to Per that he had let slip the faith that so far had sustained him, that sooner or later the truth would come out; for he cried his old cry of distress, "Will they never hear? Will they never know? When I robbed I cared not who knew it. I told the world I was robbing. 'Go, say this is Red Tiger's work,' I used to say to people I robbed. Can any man say that I ever deceived? But to be said to be robbing when I am not, that is a hateful thing. Do they think I have turned liar? I who would not have lied in my bad days, do they think I would lie now?"

It was not that he forgot that, though there were some who purposed to overthrow his goings, and sharpened their tongues like a serpent, and hid snares and cords and spread nets and set gins, yet he could lay no claim to innocence. However painful the vicissitudes of this painful life might be, he knew right well he deserved his punishment. There was nothing unjust in that. Whatever Raj did or did not do, he never made excuses for himself. Strange and unimaginable to us in our security the thoughts of such a man must be. We can hardly hope to approach to them. But what Raj touched in his deepest hours he wrote in pencil in the New Testament he used in the jail: "For He hath looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those that are appointed to death." Is there any book like the Bible for the prisoner and the outcast, or indeed for any other of the children of men?

But on that special day his cry was for justice, justice *now*, and the clearing up of the muddles of time while Time still is. He saw only too surely that he had no chance whatever in any court on earth. And he was too impatient to wait for the findings of another Court.

And he could not see that his refusal to come in gave colour to the belief that he was playing a double game (what a Jekyll and Hyde tale it would be, had he really been capable of sustaining such a part); for he never quite realised that Authority, even the kindest and fairest, could not possibly enter into his

reasons for refusing surrender. Had one among the men (who were bound to regard him from the single point of view of Law) ever been where he could begin to understand what it was that Raj dreaded for his people? "How probe an unfelt evil?" How feel an evil whose very existence is denied? "He jests at scars who never felt a wound." There is no way but that of fellowship in suffering to reveal the fact of suffering. He whom we follow read "the tear-stained book of poor men's souls," and we must read it, too, if we want to understand.

Per had left the countryside busy over a new story. It was crammed with exciting details: the Red Tiger had smashed his way into the house he had determined to rob. He had fired his gun to alarm the householder, and taken what he chose. The booty he had carried off was known down to the smallest jewel. He and his band had marched off to the forest laden with spoils enough to last them for months.

After they had gone, and the man who had been robbed had sent his report to the police, the village people told him that he was mistaken. And they told him who the robbers were. They belonged to a village of which he was over-lord, and denial was useless. They owned up to all, offered to return the loot, and besought him not to inform the Authorities.

He pondered. To change his report would not be advisable. To recover the loot at once would not be wise. He had no animus against Raj and Chotu, but he did not want to get into trouble himself. So he sent a message to the thieves. "Lie low till the matter is forgotten, then return my property. I will not change my report." Nor did he.

"It is always and everywhere Raj and Chotu," said Raj bitterly when he heard the tale. But when, as he soon did, he met some of the family on the road, he did not upbraid them, he only said, "And, knowing we were not the dacoits, yet you allowed that report to stand against us. Is it fair?" He was not always so patient. Sometimes he raged like a tormented bull baited by his picadors on all sides at once. One day he burst out with—"If only I could get at them. If only I could punch their heads!" But head-punching was a forbidden joy, and sooner or later Raj came back to his peace, and on that day he was in peace, and with no harder word than "Is it fair?" he went his way. All this Per heard from a relative of the robbed man, so he understood the cause of the assault of the adversary, for the hour of overcoming is not always the hour of exaltation. He sat by Raj now, and comforted him just by understanding and being sorry and not doubting him.

And soon Raj, convicted by his own conscience, humbled and penitent, was on his knees, confessing the shaming sin of the past. "It is all my own fault," he said to Per as he rose, and his eyes were wet. So blaming himself he forgot to blame others, and his soul settled down into quietness like the soul of a child who is sorry and forgiven. And he turned to the wild flowers growing near, and plucked them, and said to Per, "So small and yet so beautiful!" "It was wonderful," said Per, "to see this big burly rough-hewn Raj with his soul-crushing troubles sitting in the valley of the shadow of death, occupied and happy with a flower."

CHAPTER IV

WHERE THE BIRDS RANG THEIR LITTLE BELLS

Upon a rock by the river, whose ravines sheltered Raj, a company of butterflies fluttered in that peculiar dancing way that butterflies affect upon damp rocks on a sunny day. Blue and black, crimson and black, white and yellow, they made a gay little picture of pleasure. But a snake was on a rock not a foot distant. His head, an inch or two from the stone, moved as though in accord with the dancing butterflies. If he had not been a snake, one would have said that he was charmed by their play and playing with them; dancing too in his own way to his own strange rhythm. But when a snake out in the wilds appears to be charmed, he usually is, or expects to be the charmer, and though the butterflies took no notice of him, probably did not know that he was there, he was watching.

Raj and Chotu were young, they were in perfect form, strong with their strenuous open-air life, clean as their rivers. Can the young and healthy be always miserable, even if they be outlaws? There were times when they forgot that they were unhappy, and let the spirit of the butterflies have its way in them. But down on the Plains the people to whom those two men had been given as a charge to keep for the most High, could never forget that snake with his moving head on the other stone.

"Is it your presence in the Garden House that protects them, or My presence with them in the forest?" This was the word that came one night to Carunia, who had been unwillingly thinking of something that must be done in the city four hundred miles away. It was absurd and unreasonable to be reluctant to go. And yet she was reluctant.

For spiritual danger was always so near the men, and they might be so unaware of it, that she had begun to feel that she could not be away from the mountains. She must be able to see them day and night. Only so (this was the unconscious thought that had begun to form) could she always be there with them, intercepting the dark influences, be almost as a presence coming between the two sometimes butterfly-careless men and the snake that watched on the stone. She had to make shields for them. How could she go away?

But the word that came in the night discovered the folly of such feelings: the shields of the earth belong unto Thee, O Lord, not unto us. Then the inward voice said, "Go, and God which dwelleth in heaven prosper your journey, and the angels of God keep you company."

Even so companied, that visit to the city was not all ease. For just before she left home, a private message came from Raj: "If my mother goes to the great city, I will certainly follow and meet her in the streets thereof. I have also a mind to see the Governor in his palace." (This mind had been in him for some time.) There had been no way to let him know where, in a city of great spaces, his friend would be found, or to warn him that the streets thereof were not the best places for meeting. And the visit to the "palace"—imagination refused to picture it. So the prospect of his arrival was quick with anxiety. But would he arrive? Very alert-looking police officers mounted on cycles seemed to live on the borders of the stations. It was not likely that any poor disguise of his would blind those efficient people. They would note a stranger with a limp; every gesture of Raj, the very air of him as he glanced round to take his bearings of this unknown city, would mark him out to a man with eyes trained to see. And how would Raj announce his coming to his friend, supposing he did arrive and succeeded in eluding those watchers at the gates? How would he communicate with her? And what of her host, a Government Servant, who must not be compromised by any action of his guest? And should Raj find her, what would follow? It was horrible to think of him walking unconcerned into a trap. Now that Raj is safe in another City, the thought of all this is like a cold wind that blows for a moment and passes. But daggers were in it then.

And yet, as she went in and out of shops and ordinary buildings, there was peace in spite of dagger thrusts. Had not the angels of God been bidden to keep her company? Even if Raj were so foolish as to come, did not they care for him too? Could

anything happen that was not for his ultimate good? Was not the Lord of all the angels in command?

We walk by faith, not by sight. Could Carunia have seen through four hundred miles of blue air and through many leagues of green forest, there would have been no need to learn to stay her imagination upon the Lord, she would have stayed it upon the dearest sight those forests could have shown. For Raj had decided not to leave his forest, and he and Chotu had found their way to a high place in the hills, two days' journey from the Plains. That place is reached by means of a tunnel several miles long which pierces a thicket of thorny undergrowth. This thick tangle opens on a glen: "Like a little heaven," to quote Marut who had sought them out there. Many flowers grow by the river, and the birds sing sweetly in the trees that stand out in the sunshine, their roots in the stream. That cave was a place of security, for hardly would the spies follow there.

And on that sunny day, Raj plucked some flowers and smelt them. "See how beautiful! Smell how sweet!" he said, giving them to Marut. His heart was gay and light that day, a new faith had come to him; he was sure, sure beyond a doubt at last, that the truth would come out in the end, and this had comforted him. And he laughed with the laughing water, and said to Marut, "Listen to the birds. They do not think of us as men, but as creatures of the forest; so they do not fear us. Listen! They are ringing their little bells." And they sat on the smooth stones in the stream, and dabbled their feet in the water like boys, and were at rest and merry of heart with the old spontaneous gaiety which found food for laughter in very little things.

Presently the talk became serious. Marut, still not comprehending his friend's confidence, said, "But how be sure that thou wilt go on pure to thy last days?" And Raj, in a deep emphatic voice that impressed every word on Marut's memory, answered him, "*Would the One who suffered for me even to the extremity of the death-penalty forsake me at the last?*"

Marut knew of whom Raj spoke and he found no reply. If that be true, if indeed that Great One had suffered to the extremity of the death-penalty for love of a man, He was not likely to forsake him half-way through the difficult journey.

Marut was sure that Raj was genuine. Had he turned in wrath on the spy who surprised him at the mouth of his cave, Marut would not have believed in the reality of any profound change, for the year's straight walk would not have convinced

him ; he knew Raj was no robber by nature. The unintelligible was the more than human forbearance of that, "And thou, brother," to one who had behaved so abominably—a relative to be a spy—how could it be forgiven ? Marut remembered how he had shrunk back in fear lest he should be witness of a crime. But he had seen those outstretched arms and the quick rush of tears, with his own ears heard those unforgettable words of tender, heart-melting reproach. He therefore believed in Raj's conversion, for something above nature must be found to account for such an attitude of soul. He listened now, saying little, but intent. Raj, however, knew nothing of his thoughts and began to talk of his own. They were about the resurrection from the dead and the life everlasting.

He told Marut, as he had told Gir, that he knew he would shortly die by the hands of the police. "But the thing I read here is this : I dying shall live ; and in the end there will be a raising of the body, though what that means I do not know." And he talked of these high mysteries believing, but finding them very far out of his sight. And he told how his mind was at rest. "For," he said, "it is the Lord Jesus Christ who gave His life for me, who is in charge of all my matters, and what is said of me is known to Him. And He will bring forth the truth at the time that is good to Him."

There, by the bright running water, with the birds ringing their little bells, and the flowers making gardens everywhere, Marut left his friend in peace. And that day in the city, in a room that was like a room from an English home set here in India, a newspaper was handed to Carunia. In it she read of two daring dacoities, committed by Raj and Chotu, who were holding up the country. And the stories were so convincingly written that for a moment her heart shook for the men who were not yet out of reach of the destroyer ; and the tea-table and all the pretty pleasantness about her swam before her eyes, till she found herself repeating inwardly a sentence read a week before in a Lent sermon : "*We fear and suffer, but we seldom suffer the thing that we fear. God does not crucify us upon the olive trees under whose boughs we have sweated blood.*" Not under that olive tree would be the crucifixion of her hope. And yet may pardon be granted if words such as these should not be used. The extremity of anguish is not for us to know.

CHAPTER V

INKED WATERS, AND THE C.I.D.

When by your cause you stand its one defender,
And hear the jeers and anger grow more loud,
When greater men than you, grave-eyed, and tender,
Look on your lone defiance from the crowd—

BUT even so, there is a cup that must be drained. There was a touch of that, except that Raj's friend was not ever really alone, for a splendid group of men and women stood with her, firm in faith through good report and ill. But sometimes, in spite of all, a question that could not be proved of no account was allowed to assail her: Far wiser people than you believe you mistaken; they have ways unknown to you of getting at the truth. What if they are right?

A year and three months after Raj's death, a forest officer from the Native State where Raj so often stayed, chanced to be in the neighbourhood of the Garden House. He was a stranger to that house, but it soon appeared that he had an interest in its life. He had heard of Raj, and spoke of him as a true man, whose truth would one day come to light. He told of how his subordinates had told him of Raj's life with them on the mountains "while he was reported to be robbing on the Plains," of his simple courtesies (remembered everywhere), of his loyalty (his mere presence, they said, was enough to ensure the safety of the forests); of his anxious care over Chotu, whose heart was not yet fully set on righteousness, of his continual influence on all towards good, and of his books in their little skin bag, and of how he used to read and sing the songs he knew. "Yes, it will come out one day," said the forest officer. "For truth is bound to conquer. It cannot be held down for ever."

But it was held down then.

After Carunia left the city where, in clean, kind places far from this poor little fringe of its empire, the Governing Body sat, another from the Garden House had business there. And he heard that a man belonging to the C.I.D. was to be sent to the disturbed district to search into Raj's matters. He who was to go was famed for his clever disguises. This greatly heartened the Garden House, and for many weeks it regarded with interest all floating sadhus and pedlars, and even beggars, for the Criminal Investigation Department might be begging by the roadside.

It was a forlorn hope after all. And for this reason: the waters where these matters swam by this time had been thoroughly inked.

A giant cuttlefish had squirted his darkening fluid at the very mention of the name of Raj. And as every village had its spies who were proficient ink-squirters, the villages where Raj had at first been trusted and loved were now fearful and distrustful, for they heard nothing but tales of his prodigious crimes. And soon it became so dangerous to know anything about him, and above all anything to his credit, that those who knew kept silence. The honourable evaded questions. The less honourable lied freely. "Who tells truth to the Sirkar?" this formula, which is practically a proverb, applied to all their communication with anyone known to be in touch with the police. And where they did not know of such connection, and might be supposed to be frank in speech, they feared to be so. For it was not safe to confess to an interest in Raj, much less a belief in him, except to one known to be his trusty friend.

The newspapers meanwhile continued to display their startling head-lines and tell their shocking tales. It did not seem to occur to anyone to trace the damnatory stories to their source. Who could have then foretold that a year later the correspondent who had telegraphed those reports (as if truth were in the habit of jumping to the eye ready to be telegraphed) would call them "tales founded on fiction, but the public, you know, likes things spiced," and with his own hand write what he meant to be a handsome apology:

"As the writer of the newspaper articles to which reference is made in this book, truth compels me to say that I was misled by my informants . . . and in justice to the memory of a brave man I should like to state that, despite his lapses previous to his last escape from jail the outstanding feature of his life was that he was a sportsman who always disdained to hit below the belt." (The various letters and documents to which reference is made in this story are not reproduced in facsimile, lest trouble should come to the writers; though in several cases leave to use such was willingly given.)

But all that was known then was that everybody said Raj was continually robbing, and occasionally killing, and that it was extremely unwise to say anything else. And who, indeed, knew anything else? None save the group of quiet men who said nothing, lest if a man spoke he should be snapped up and hurled down and ground to powder, and Raj be left with one less to care for him in his peril.

So, long before Raj and his affairs had become important enough to demand serious investigation, a little coterie of friends had gathered round him, who alone held the password which opened the way into knowledge. Without that word no man or woman

spoke freely to a stranger, however apparently friendly. The Garden House would have thankfully given the password to the one sent to inquire, and would then have stood aside, confident that the truth would have been found. But no one asked for it.

There could be reticence even in that little coterie. One day Carunia was in a house which had sheltered Raj and Chotu, and, though the people of the house knew that she knew that they knew that she would have chopped off her right hand with the vegetable cutter then in operation on a pumpkin rather than betray one of them, for quite a long time it was as if a film were between. Raj was merely mentioned as one about whom they had heard rumours.

For she had never been there before ; hence the film created in a moment by the gathered instinct of a thousand years between her and the people of the house. Not till she had sat for a long time with the old grandmother, helping her to shred tamarinds, not till the basket that stood on the floor between them was nearly full, did what may be called a glimmer of awareness lighten the old lady's face ; and after that she began in a desultory allusive kind of speech to take her into confidence. Then, a glance at the daughters of the house, and the film was gone, dissolved like a whiff of smoke in the air. But, even then, the less said the better.

Even among children there was the same extreme reticence. The Garden House girls had been for weeks good friends with the Hindu children in a town under the hills, where they went to teach and sing, Sunday by Sunday, before a child of eight or nine called one of them aside. " See," she said, pointing to a deep-set door in a high wall that opened on to a private lane, " by that door we used to let Raj in and out when he came to see our father, and we never told anybody, never." " He was life to our life," said the women of that house in speaking of him, when at last they spoke their inmost thoughts, " not a man, woman or child in all this town would have betrayed him." But from their talk before, no one would have gathered that they cared in the least ; or at all believed in him.

So, for these various reasons, no help came from the C.I.D. and all went on as before.

CHAPTER VI

THE WIDOW OF THE JEWELS

Among Raj's many friends was a widow who lived in a village far from the road. To approach it you go through a lane sunk low between muddy banks, which in wet weather is two feet deep in

mud. Raj knew that the widow was anxious about the marriage of her youngest daughter. The village was a long way from the hills, but he never seems to have thought of risk for himself, and he may have thought that its isolation would make all safe for his hostess.

With him and Chotu was Maya, an old relative of Raj, poor, rather infirm, quite despicable in character, but such a pitiful old creature that Raj in his folly used him in various ways, and, as Raj always paid his helpers with a lavish generosity (which was one reason why his forest life was more costly than might have been expected), the old man was eager to be used. He accompanied Raj and Chotu now, and going a little in advance of them, found the house of the widow to whom Raj was bound, and tapped at her door.

It was dusk, but not late. She opened the door. A little curly-headed girl who was playing on the floor looked up wonderingly.

" Raj and Chotu are near by," whispered old Maya. " This is a letter from Raj," and he thrust a twisted scrap of paper into her hands.

The widow closed the door. Someone read the note to her, " I am here, do not have me if thou art afraid. We will go away." She opened the door again.

" Tell them to come," she whispered to Maya, and he disappeared into the dusk.

Presently there was a tap at the door and she opened it eagerly. The three men passed in and the door was shut.

Then, after the usual salutations, Raj did a thing that shone in the widow's memory like a little coloured picture hung on the walls of a small room and lighted with a candle. He took her three-year-old granddaughter on his knee, and said, " What is thy name, little one ? " And when the child answered shyly he said, " Thou must have a new name, and be a Christian child." And he said, " Listen, learn this song from me." And the child followed him through a few simple lines from the lyric, " Lover of souls," which Raj appears to have sung wherever he went.

It was after this when the little child, sung to sleep by the crooning song, was laid on her mat, that they began to talk together.

" And how are thy children, and where ? " the widow asked.

" They are with my mother," answered Raj simply.

" But thy mother is dead," said the widow perplexed.

Then Raj explained, and told her about his children. He had been cheered lately by something too small, one might have thought, to reach him at all. One day the boys of the Garden

Village were on their way to the water lying under the hills when some English-speaking men passed them.

"I wonder where those children are going," said one of them as they passed, and the quick answer came from a boy in the merry mob, "We are going to the water." He spoke in English.

The men stopped, and glanced down at the upturned little face with its flashing eyes, full of the fun and the joy of life. "Why, it is Raj's boy!" And the men passed on. But that story flew to Raj. "They are learning English," he said with a father's pride. "They are very well and happy."

"Is it true that thou wilt not rob?" asked the widow. Raj told her then, very humbly, of his change of life, and she set food before them, and watched them curiously as they bent their heads for a moment over the rice, speaking to One invisible, thanking Him for the food.

Then they got to the business that had brought Raj there. "I have a bridegroom in mind," he said to the widow. "In the village near my native village, many have become people of the Christian way; thou hast heard somewhat of that."

The widow nodded. She had heard something of what had been happening in the Village of the Reeds.

"One of the lads, a good lad, I know him well, would be suitable for thy young daughter. But—she must be a Jesus Christ worshipper, or he could not marry her."

"But how can that be?" said the widow.

"I will tell thee." Raj had it all planned out: "I will get word to my mother of this. She will send someone to teach thy little daughter. Then will the child believe and understand; and when that time comes, I will send word again; and my mother, perhaps, will come; and thou shalt set the maid and the young man here in the middle of the courtyard; and I shall be in yonder," and he pointed to a tiny windowless room where stores and sundries were kept. "The door can be ajar, and through the narrow opening I shall see all the happiness and rejoice."

"But," began the widow, scandalised at the thought of so unusual a wedding.

"It will be right and suitable," Raj continued calmly. "My mother will put the golden bracelet on thy child's arm with her own hands, and she will pray over them as they sit together" (was it his idea of a Christian marriage which he had never seen?) "and all will be well. And I shall be with you, rejoicing with you, yes—but without danger to any, for who will look there for me?" And he pointed again to the dark little cubby-hole, and laughed.

"Now get me the marriage jewels," he commanded. "I should like to see them."

The widow brought them. "I had them made from my own," she said. "Are they not just right for her?" And she looked happily at the golden trinkets fashioned like the waxy lilac flower of the calotropis which grows on the wilds.

"They are very fine," said Raj, "and just right for thy child." Raj was a connoisseur in jewels. The mother was satisfied.

Then, the matter settled, the widow, greatly daring, had a goat slain, and prepared a cautious feast; and, with affection that no fear could stifle, a few kinsfolk joined in welcoming this Raj of theirs who had returned to them healed from his sins. Again there was that unwonted pause, as Raj and Chotu thanked their God for His provision of good rice and goat-curry, and they fell to, and were happy.

Raj did not seem the least afraid. A small noisy festival was being held in the village that night, and, though there was a moon and he might have been seen, Raj let the weird music and the insistent beat of the tomtoms draw him out of the safe little house, and he watched that festival as he had watched many, and returned to the house, he believed, unobserved.

But on a day a few weeks afterwards, when Raj had been for three pure days keeping a holier festival, a man on his way to his fields met two constables, old acquaintances of his, between whom walked a frightened-looking woman, and in the easy way of his land he drifted into talk with them, and they told him about their prisoner, "found with jewels, loot from one of Raj and Chotu's last robberies. Ask her, she has confessed to it," and they moved aside a little. Then the woman eager to unburden herself whispered hurriedly: "It is true that I said it. But I told a lie. Raj gave me nothing. They were my own, made new for my little daughter's wedding. I could not hold out against the himsa." It was the widow of the jewels and the feast. The man did what he could to bring the truth to light. But nothing is harder than to uncover truth.

A few days later, the widow was taken to Court to be tried for receiving stolen jewels from Raj. She stood at the end of the long room, looking with frightened puzzled eyes on the unfamiliar surroundings. She saw her precious jewels, her very own, remade for her little girl's wedding, handed up to be examined. And her heart stood still. She had said that Raj had given them from loot. But he had not given them at all. They were hers; but she had said that they were stolen. Would the Great One who held them in his hand give them back to her? If he did not,

what would she do? Her little daughter must have jewels, or she could not be married. Now the Great One who was sitting by himself on a raised place was looking at them. He was saying something, *brandu*, what did "*brandu*" mean?

Then she was hustled off. She did not understand in the least why, or what was happening, only that he who sat on the raised place had said "*brandu*" about her precious jewels. Would he ever give them back?

It was then that Carunia, having occasion to go to the railway station, saw a desolate figure sitting on the ground between two policemen. The woman was in the soiled and tumbled white of the widow; her face was hidden. The policemen looked approachable, and not knowing who she was, Carunia asked them to allow her to comfort their poor prisoner whose drooping figure looked so pitiful there, alone among men. One of her guards was hardly more than a boy, and he said quickly, "Gladly, gladly; she is in much trouble," and Carunia sat down on the flagged pavement and touched the woman's hand. A sorrowful doubtful face unwrapped itself from the folds of the sari. A white woman, even though she was in a sari (like her own, only clean), was an unknown quantity. "It is she whom they call mother of Raj," said the friendly policeman. The woman put her hand in Carunia's. "O mother of Raj!" she exclaimed, and made friends at once.

Then the pitiful little tale was told. "They came to my house suddenly, and they seized me, and flung me on the floor and kicked me and stamped on me and, holding me down, they said, 'We are going to beat you till you say Raj gave you these jewels.' And I said, 'I will never say so, for he never did so.' Then they beat me. I cannot even now lie on my right side. And still I would not say so. And a crowd gathered round my house, and my daughter was crying, and they thrust her out of the room. There was much shouting and again they said, 'Say it, Say it!' and again I said, 'No, I will not say it; the jewels are my own. Raj never gave me any.' At last, after much beating and terror, a man brought four datura fruits" (a small fruit covered with sharp spines)—— Here she broke off. The young policemen were near. She could not continue.

"It is all true," they said with sympathy. "The himsa was very cruel." And they said that the charge had broken down because the jewels were brand-new (and so could not possibly be loot. Not often did a slip like this occur). The widow was given a light sentence and a fine; but she was in terror at the thought of jail and had fallen at the feet of anyone who looked

important, explaining that it was all a lie about the jewels, and not in the least understanding that she was not going to jail for receiving them, but for giving a meal to Raj. When she did at last understand, she opened her eyes wide. "But was it not merit to feed those who were hungry because they would not sin?"

Just then an older policeman came up. He turned a savage face on the lads. "What are you telling her (meaning Carunia)?"

"Nothing, nothing," they said. "What should we say? What do we know?"

After this the poor thing trembled too much to do more than moan, "Oh, I beseech you, comfort my people at home!" and, soothed by the promise that they would be comforted, she tried to smile.

A few days later, standing in the village street where the widow's relatives frantic with fear of more trouble were crowding round, Carunia and a Brahman woman who had gone with her heard more. But not much more. Some of the old women in the crowd began to tell what had finally subdued the widow, but the men interrupted.

"Tell her not. It is too brutal."

But the old woman retorted angrily:

"If *she* had to bear it, may not she bear to hear of it?"

Then the old woman drew aside the Brahman who had caught part of the forbidden sentence, and told her all. The woman on the floor yielded before the infernal thing they threatened then was done, and fell to beseechings and strokings of the cruel face bent over her, with pleading hands that, more eloquent than lips, besought him to spare her this. "Say it then. Say, 'Raj gave me these jewels from his loot,'" and she said it.

But that night in the little house, as she heaped the steaming rice on the plantain leaves, and ladled out curries, dropping them in yellow pools round the white rice, the widow had had no fears. Nor had Raj. So they feasted happily together, and on the following night when all was quiet the door was opened, and Raj and Chotu and Maya slipped out into the dark.

CHAPTER VII

THE IBEX HUNTER

It was the time when the early rice is beginning to think of harvest, and a pale honey colour plays over it, soon to turn to miles of gold, while the later fields are still green as grass, and unfenced,

unhedged, one vast velvet floor, stretch out to the mountains' foot. There is no waste between hills and plain in the richer regions of the Native State where Raj had so many friends and a few relentless foes.

Among those lush lowlands, lying quiet and secure, watched by serrated peaks that in the evening look like carven precious stones, is the Village of the Peacock, a little scattered village with narrow streets, ancient houses and quaint old-fashioned courtyards.

To such a house, in such a street, came one night the rough sound of a knock at the door and shouts were heard as of men calling to each other. "Red Tiger!" shouted a voice, "Red Tiger! Open to Red Tiger!" and armed men burst into the courtyard, and shortly afterwards went off with a great heap of jewels.

"Aye, it was Raj and Chotu," said the old lady of the house when, a month or two after the furore had died down, she was telling the tale. "Not that we knew them. Oh no, but I with my own ears heard Chotu shout, 'Red Tiger!'"

"And so did I," said the head of the house. "I saw neither Raj nor Chotu, but I heard them shout the names. I heard Chotu call, 'Red Tiger!'"

And yet the Red Tiger had need to be winged if he robbed in that village that night.

For on the day before, he and Chotu spent a quiet hour with Per, who continually watched over the two as one who must give account. It was wonderful that he was able to go and come and never once found himself embarrassed by any who observed. Perhaps it was that his fine commanding presence disarmed suspicion, perhaps in the Unseen Order word had gone forth to have him attended, for he was about his Father's business. However it was, the fact remains that he was rarely far from Raj and Chotu during those weeks and, though often it was unwise or impossible for him to communicate with the Garden House, and so that house was sometimes the last to hear of sure comfort, and was kept on the stretch in prayer in a way that can never be forgotten, yet he himself had good reason for the faith that was in him where the men were concerned. Always at the back of his mind was the hope of the miracle being wrought which would make prison, nay death by the shameful rope, as dust in the balance to them. But he could not press them beyond what they were able to bear.

He sat with them by a river on the lower slopes of the Dæmon's Peak, and when he told the story, in order to show it to his listeners, he went out to the lane and found the wild flowers that

grew by that stream. The grace of the fashion of such flowers was to him as to Raj a quick and perpetual pleasure.

As he talked they saw a river running between trees, and festoons of white jasmin and pink convolvulus hanging over the water, and tall feathery-headed lemon grass in sunlit spaces, and patches of purple, where a flower used in olden time in the ritual of the consecration of weapons threw its carpet on the edges of the stream. And there was tulasi, the most worshipped of all plants. Raj could not pluck the little herb and crush its stem and leaves between his fingers without being forthwith carried away to his earliest days, for that scent is a part of the heritage of every Hindu child.

"There is someone on the Dæmon's Peak," said Raj when they met, and Per could see a figure up among the rocks; friend or foe who could tell? So they sat close under the trees as they talked.

The talk was chiefly about the way the people on the Plains were being harassed, blackmail was being freely levied, and many were paying it to avoid being charged with complicity in the robberies. Raj said they felt they must go less often to the Plains, for they could not go without risking this trouble for their friends. It was well for his peace of mind that he could not see into the future, could not see a man stand up in Court and state exactly what he had refused to pay and why he was entangled; could not see that man's face when he heard the verdict of the jury (three out of the five had found him guilty), and the sentence pronounced—six years' rigorous imprisonment; could not see him taken from the district jail where at least he had work and exercise, and confined in a cell in a sub-jail for many months untried, charged with dacoiting with him, Raj, in the village among the rice fields a day's journey from this river where he and Per and Chotu talked together then. Well for him that he did not see the widow to whose little grandchild he had taught the song that hundreds to-day call Raj's song, trampled on, threatened, insulted, overwhelmed, till she broke down, and said all she was told to say.

Part of the talk that afternoon was about some gifts which he and Chotu had lately received. If the matter came to the ear of the police, the affair would, of course, be worked up into a case. If his friends refused to take this line, they would be involved in trouble. It sounded intolerable to Per, more so than to Raj and Chotu, but after all our feelings are largely dependent on our light. Their light was far from perfect day. And so all who had to do with them were kept on the rack lest they should do something definitely compromising, or yield, even for only the briefest

moment, to one of the many tempters who found them out wherever they were. So Per said earnestly, "Let us pray together now."

As they knelt, Raj unfastened his knapsack and laid it on the rock; and when they rose from their knees Per asked him if he had money in it. Raj laughed and handed the knapsack to him, and Per shook out its contents on the rock; there was a razor, soap, a mirror and comb, papers, a pencil, some cartridges, and two books, the "Gospel of St. Mark" and "the Psalms." Chotu kept the money, part of what had been returned by their first betrayer whom Raj had forgiven, and liberal gifts from friends, and they showed it to Per.

Then they arranged for food to be sent next day to a place near the shrine where the posse of police had lain in ambush a year ago. And Per promised to direct the man they named as messenger, and to see that all they required was in the bundle he would take. They could not carry much in their continual quick journeys, so they asked for only enough for four days, four measures of rice and some condiments.

Next morning, the man appointed took the bundle of food, and Raj and Chotu met him and took the bundle from him and set off for the high rocks of the Dæmon's Peak. There they were sitting, when from among the rocks a figure emerged and approached them. A glance told them they had nothing to fear. The stranger seeing that they had guns thought they were sportsmen and got into conversation with them. He found them keen enough on sport, they knew all about the haunts of the ibex on the high rocks. Presently when they sat down to rest he asked their names, and when he heard he stared astonished.

"I thought you were robbing on the Plains," he said, "our papers are full of your exploits."

"Many will tell you we are robbing," answered Raj, and he added calmly, "if we were robbing on the Plains, how could we be sitting on the hills?"

The ibex hunter was interested. They talked long together, and hunted together, a strangely assorted trio; for the ibex hunter was in the confidential service of his Government. But under the open sky on the great hills things do not always wear the same expression as in the houses of men. And that night the dacoity was committed in the Village of the Peacock.

Next day Per heard of it, and by chance met some men from the village itself, and they whispered the name of one who was, so the bazaars whispered, pulling the secret strings that connected the series of thefts, assaults, robberies and dacoities that filled the hectic months. But no one named that name aloud.

A week or two after Raj was dead Dura happened to hear him discussed by a man of some importance who hailed from another part of the country, and, joining the little knot of men who listened eagerly, heard of how one day the speaker had been shooting ibex on the high rocks of the Dæmon's Peak when he came upon two men whom he took to be hunters. And the tale was told of that afternoon's sport. "And next day the Plains were ringing with the Red Tiger's big dacoity in a village a good day's walk from the Peak. And just," concluded the hunter in confident tones, "as he was robbing in the Village of the Peacock, when he was up on the high rocks of the Dæmon's Peak, so was he robbing in the Village of the Temple, and in a score of other villages while he was somewhere else. And no one sees through the deception."

Then Dura came forward. He, like many another, greatly wished that Raj's name could be cleared of the stain that blackened it in the eyes of official South India and wherever the newspaper stories were believed. So he asked the ibex hunter if he would speak out and say what he knew.

"I certainly should have done so if he had lived and had been tried for that crime," said the hunter, "but he is safe out of the hands of his persecutors now. What does it signify to him who is dead what is said of him? And for me to move in the matter would bring trouble to me from the police of my own State. For many reasons this would be inexpedient. And as it would do no good, it is best to be silent."

CHAPTER VIII

THE GOLD MEDAL

And now it appears, from what all who saw Raj about this time say, that he stayed for the most part up on the hills where the clear inviolate water was like a living friend and the forest trees were kind to him and the birds sang among the branches. But sometimes he came down for a few hours, and to several he spoke of his death as near. He seems to have had a great longing to see his children, and sent more than one message to Carunia begging that he might be allowed to come to the Garden House. But she was pledged not to encourage that, unless he were willing to surrender, and, hard as it was to refuse, she had to refuse. One night he came very near the house, but without letting her know, and he went to the hut of a woman who knew the place, and could tell him of his children.

"How are they?" he asked her wistfully, and he named them each one: Delight, who was well named, she had clapped her hands and danced in a perfect abandon of pleasure when she heard of his baptism, and the little son who was so like his father that he seemed to love nothing so much as giving away his possessions, and whose climbing feats were already a wonder to the family, and the more fragile little younger son whom Seetha had held in her arms when she stood at the door that fatal day. "Dost ever see them?" he asked the woman, his eyes fixed hungrily on her face.

"I do not see them but I often hear of them," she answered comfortingly. "They are tended like flowers."

Raj raised his hands to heaven in a gesture of thanks, and then he told the woman that he would soon die. "But all is well," he said, "we are in peace. I am in peace about my children." Then he turned and went swiftly back to the hills.

And there he and Chotu met another hunter who tested the men on his own account and in his own fashion. He came across them much as the ibex hunter had done and, like him, was astonished when he knew who they were.

"I thought you were piling up loot on the Plains," he remarked after a while.

Raj laughed. "So they say," he said; but the laugh passed. Raj was sore under his laughter. Robbing was bad enough, but to be known as a deceiver was a bitterness no consciousness of integrity could sweeten.

The hunter drew his story from him, heard of the Lotus Water and the teaching and the Book.

"I, too, am a Christian," he said, when Raj had told of the change in desire wrought by this mighty Saviour of men; and then they talked of other things.

But the hunter was still suspicious. The Indian proverb says, "A pickle from the pot shows the nature of the whole." The pot is the vessel in which the rice is boiled. The cook takes out a single grain, rubs it between her fingers, and knows the condition of the whole.

"I will test him," said the hunter to himself; then to Raj, "My fellow-hunter is a scoundrel. He undertook to guide me to good hunting to-day and he went off on his own account. I have lost the best part of my day in consequence." Raj sympathized.

"Wait till he comes back. I will pay him out for it," said the hunter.

Raj opened his eyes at this. "But I thought you were a

Christian," he said, with the directness of the man of the hills. "Should not a Christian forgive ?"

It was the hardest lesson set him to learn, and he had hardly realized that it had not been mastered by every man who in sincerity calls himself a Christian. But the hunter knew better, and he could not escape from the thought. Here was a man, he said to himself, accused of murder, dacoity, robbery, and the vilest kind of hypocrisy. He had no hope whatever of being righted during his lifetime in the eyes of men, and yet he would not yield ; taken unawares, he rang true.

A few days later the hunter talked to some schoolboys ; they knew of the brigand captain and had heard something of the life he now lived on the hills. How explain it ? "Apparently this is a question involving not the mere turning of a shell, but the revolution of a soul which is traversing a road leading from a kind of night-day up to a true day of real existence."

The hunter did not express his thoughts in these ancient famous words. But he gave their sense to those lads ; and their imagination was kindled : "Let us all join together," they said, eager to reach and console with their generous trust this man so strangely tried. "Let us have a fine gold medal made and send it to him."

Before it had reached him, Raj was where the gold medals of earth must look very trivial toys. And yet the love that gave it its value was something over which death has no power ; so it may be Raj has his medal after all.

But—for this was hidden for a little from his friends on the British side, they, thinking of the men in their need, cried for wings that they might fly to them and with hands of human love pull them back from the precipice edge which could never be far from their feet. They looked to those hills that, in clear shining after rain, open their familiar recesses, and the white threads of their waterfalls, and the colours of their woods. Oh, to be there ! But no, it was the word that had come before : The shields of the earth belong unto God; by prayer alone those men and women must learn to prevail. And when was human love a mightier thing than prayer to the living God ?

CHAPTER IX

HIS CAVE OF ADULLAM

"How long will this robber chief be allowed to plunder the people ? The whole of South India is surprised as to why the Government is so slow to send a big company of British soldiers

to scour the country and secure the man. The people are taking shelter in the (neighbouring) territory, leaving their homes, and it is high time that immediate steps were taken to capture the dacoit chief. While Rome was burning, Nero was fiddling. Surely benign British Government cannot go to sleep when the people are in great danger of their lives and the loss of their property. The easiest solution of the problem is to proclaim a free pardon, and to promise Government employment. This will have immediate effect, and the man will surrender from his Cave of Adullam."

This letter to the Press, translated into the vernacular of the afflicted district, made Per smile a half-humorous, half-sad smile. "If they only knew," he said, "if they only knew!"

Raj's Cave of Adullam at one time during those weeks was in the valley that opens on the Lotus Water, and one day it was a tree growing near that water. The tree is old, and rent by a fissure which leaves it hardly more than a shell, but it is shady still, and from it one can see the people who cross the plain on their way to and from the valleys among the hills. Raj and Chotu were sitting under that tree when a wood-cutter passed and Raj hailed him.

The wood-cutter was a thoughtful man, he knew of Raj's reputation, and he knew too that it had no foundation in fact. Like other men of the villages near the mountains, he knew that Raj had countless opportunities to avenge himself on all who had offended him, and he knew that he had refused to hurt any of them. This had often perplexed the wood-cutter. Now was his opportunity; he advanced eagerly, and the two men fell into talk.

Presently Raj pulled out his books from the bag that he always carried. "I cannot explain these matters," he said, "I have not wisdom for that, but this Book will tell thee all I have not wit to say. See, here is a word which I have tested and proved," and he read slowly:

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me: for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

The golden sunshine of late afternoon made little flickering pools of light on the ground where the three men sat. For a while they sat in silence in the play of sun and shadow, and then Raj spoke again.

"Men wonder why I do not rob," he said.

The wood-cutter nodded. He had often wondered.

Raj turned the pages of his New Testament, till he found a well-thumbed place.

"No servant can serve two masters," he read, "for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Again for a while there was silence, and Raj looked away to the hills. "*Cannot*," he said at last, "it says *cannot*." And the wood-cutter bowed his head.

But there was the other question about forgiveness still unanswered; he knew that the remembrance of the false friend's treachery, and the himsa that had left Raj lame for life, must be painful to recall. Who was he that he should rub pepper on a raw wound? And yet he wanted to know more than the meagre, "I have been forgiven, so I must forgive," that was all anyone appeared to have heard; so he began with a tentative, "Thy friend who betrayed thee—thou hast not injured him?"

"No," said Raj.

"Nor the brothers of the Village of the Herons?"

"No," said Raj.

"O Raj," said the wood-cutter, "pardon my importunity; tell me—*Why not?*"

And this time Raj turned to the great letter of the apostle of love. And the wood-cutter marvelled as the words fell slowly, as if Raj were pondering each one of them:

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

The men sat in lighted air. The sun, nearing his setting, made the wide plain like a field of ripe corn, and the ground under the tree was bright. Raj pointed away to the mountains where the outgoings of the evening were rejoicing, and then to the Lotus Water, and the green shore, and he told of that other evening, and of all that had happened by that water; and again, as if no more words were needed, he read:

"*Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*"

Then the moon rose behind the belt of palms on the plain, and the mountains were folded in silver mist, and the wood-cutter went home, leaving Raj and Chotu under the tree not far from the Lotus Water.

CHAPTER X

A GREAT VOICE AS OF A TRUMPET

But if Raj would not surrender? Capture, it seemed, was sure. It could only be a question of time. Days, hours, minutes beat like the throbs of a drum, beating to that moment. And what then? If Raj broke down before that woe, what of the glory of the Lord?

It was not the first time that poignant question had pierced the hearts of Raj's friends.

And darkness overwhelmed her whom he called mother as she waited in the forest for Per, who was to bring a letter from the men. Had a fog risen up from the earth and stained the pure glory of God?

But the Lord whom we serve does not shut us up in the hand of the enemy. He turns our heaviness into joy and He puts off our sackcloth and girds us with gladness. Fear is on every side, says the man in his distress, and his Lord says, Look, and he looks, and lo, there is no fear anywhere, for mercy embraceth him on every side, and his soul that was vexed within him remembers his God.

It was so on that day of the weakness of fear, for it was shown, even as a father might show a beautiful thing to a child, that the glory of the Lord is too high to be obscured by the poor failures of earth. In the far end there will be the perfect triumph of righteousness. And there was strong consolation in the memory of the years' intercession. Seetha in the Village of the Cactus had been the first of a band of intercessors that could hardly be numbered. What a panoply of prayer had been thrown round this poor brigand. On one of his darkest days he had heard of prayer made for him in a convent on Mount Sinai, and had been comforted. In the X-ray room of a London hospital, one, searched by rays so powerful that the surgeons had to watch her through glass doors, prayed out of that place of burnings for him, prayed till her spirit passed up like a flame. And so it was in a thousand places, people of all communities, all shades of faith, prayed to the living God who hears prayer. Does He move to such prayer to no purpose? Did He ever move to prayer to disappoint at last?

Then, like a trumpet, pealed forth the great Scripture that had come on the day that had no brightness in it:

"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

And the trumpet went on speaking:

"I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold His righteousness."

"Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy."

But there is something in the human heart that not even the voice of a trumpet can reach or satisfy. One deep calleth another. The thought of the impenetrable darkness that surrounded Raj had still a dreadful power to distress, till the memory came of that other night when the word was given, "He who died for him will plan for him." What if all fails, all thy plans, all thy hopes, and this strong wrestling with forces too strong for thee ends in apparent defeat, and the world that never wept a tear for these men's souls laughs thee to scorn, what of that? When was thy Lord defeated? He who died for them will plan for them.

But, O Lord, How?

"Then the Lord said, Is the Lord's hand waxed short? Thou shalt see now whether My word shall come to pass unto thee or not."

Sometimes towards the end of a stifling day in India a light wind blows from the sea, and suddenly the mind revives and forgets the sluggish body. So at that moment a wind awoke, a sense of sweetest refreshment, a comforting sense: the words were wind, were life. Not of words merely read, or even loved, is it said that they are spirit and life, but "the words that *I* have spoken unto you they are spirit and they are life."

Then slowly, the ravine throbbed with a low music. Chord by chord it rose from a chaos of fear and doubt and sadness and sin, till it reached open sunlight. Confident chords rang out. Had the climber reached the hill-top? No, crashing through that hard-won joy came the weird, cruel, piercing notes, curling and writhing, that, like nothing that can be spoken, suggest the laughter of fiends. They beat upon the song, echoing from the sides of the mountains that rose round the little forest house. The song was fighting its way up like a live thing in a brave distress, slowly, painfully, chord by chord, surer and surer, till at last, at long last, the howling laughter fell back, and again the mind could only see the hungry waves that disappointed of their prey fell impotent. And the song climbed on, soared like a bird on powerful wings, escaped from man's night and devil's laughter for ever and for ever, and was lost in the depths of the heavens of God.

It was the music that flings this story with one great gesture out of the fog, and reveals what is in it. Let him who has an ear hear

it, and he need not toil over the printed page. In one flash of insight he will see it ; one pang, and he will feel it. It was the music of the Pilgrims' Chorus.

It was now morning, and the mountains shone.

CHAPTER XI

"I HAVE A LETTER"

Upon a rock before Carunia lay a newspaper cutting. In the core of that troubled night the story it told had burdened the hours ; it was powerless to break the heart now, but still it was a grievous thing. It told in much detail of the crime " committed by the notorious Raj and Chotu," in the Village of the Peacock, and she did not recognise it at first as one about which she had good cause to be at rest ; for among the many names of the many villages—almost every day brought a new one—where Raj and Chotu were reported to be robbing, the name had escaped her memory. Some who have heard the story of these months of constant prayer and many tokens for good, have felt it a strange thing that any concerned could fear at all. But, though an assurance had been given of ultimate triumph, no word had been spoken which could be understood to promise that Raj's feet would never slip on the slippery paths of the world. Through what anguish might not victory have to be won ? Cold print can give a deadly sense of certainty. No one dreamed in those days that the writer of those tragic tales, tales which so impressed a London journalist of good repute that he referred to Raj as the greatest brigand of modern times, would unashamed allude to them as fictitious. But comfort was walking up the hill, a gang of wood-cutters passed the house and Carunia called them.

The head man came forward, a fine muscular fellow.

" Hast thou heard anything about this dacoity in the Village of the Peacock ? "

The man grinned all over his big tolerant face.

" Ay, verily I have, I have heard all about it. Men from the Peacock's Village came to our village yesterday."

" Who dacoited ? "

He named the caste of the gang, and with a careful glance round indicated by a sweep of the hand one said to be interested. It was the one about whom the bazaars had been whispering for months. " It is reported, of course, as Raj and Chotu's doing," he added.

" How art thou so sure it was not their doing ? "

" Those who came told us everything, it was very cleverly

managed. They knew the robbers, but could not do anything. It was not Raj and Chotu's work."

But comfort still more precious was on its way. Early next morning Per appeared, his good face glowing with the particular glow that meant all was well with the men.

"Yes, all is well. They have been for some little time with excellent people who tell me they have been living straight. I could not find them for several days, for the hunt is being pressed close."

Carunia knew this; she had read in the same newspaper cutting of a very able police officer who had been summoned, an old friend, and the best of men. She was torn by fears for both, for the soul of the one and the body of the other, for she had thought of the Englishman as leading in person this new chase on the mountains, and Masefield's "Reynard the Fox" had raced through her:

> All the way to that blinding end
> He would meet with men and have none his friend:
> Men to holloa and men to run him,
> With stones to stagger and yells to stun him;
> Men to head him, with whips to beat him,
> Teeth to mangle and mouths to eat him,
> And all the way, that wild high crying,
> To cold his blood with the thought of dying.

And then at the end: "With his ears flexed back and his teeth shown white, in a rat's resolve for a dying bite." O God, if they must shoot let him shoot straight—the hunter, not the hunted.

. . . . . .

"I have a letter," said Per.

"To our mother her sons write as follows." The peaceful beginning seemed far from Reynard the Fox, and the hunt to the death.

"When the one whom our mother sent came to us, and gave us the letter, to us, looking at it with great joy, it was as though our mother had come and stood directly in front of us: and we took the letter and laid it on our eyes.

"We continue to be happy always, and continue to pray. No manner of theft or robbery are we doing."

Then they told how, though this was so, the word about them still continued to be "They are robbing! They are robbing!" They could not help feeling that some, at least, who accepted these reports knew them to be untrue. "And yet the word continues, and is spread everywhere. And our names are put in the records as robbing," they wrote, "and the poor have himsa, and

we who are doing none of these evil things may not rest anywhere, but continually must move from one place to another in much trouble of spirit." Then, after a few sentences about the conditions of their life, which they realized were inevitable and could only end one way, they added, "we are being kept."

"I took the letter," said Per, "and told them I would return next day, and said if they had more to write, they could write it. And then, finding they had no paper, I gave them a little that I had with me. Next day when I went, this was ready": the crumpled paper was covered with close writing in pencil.

This was what Raj had written:

"With my whole heart have I sought Thee; O let me not wander from Thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against Thee. Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant, O Lord, according unto Thy word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I have believed Thy commandments. Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept Thy word. My soul fainteth for Thy salvation; but I hope in Thy word. Mine eyes fail for Thy word, saying, When wilt Thou comfort me? Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice; let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.

"To my mother—greeting. I will never forget. When I see your writing, it is as if I saw my mother and, laying it on my eyes, I pray. I am in the mountains."

But having got so far on his journey towards the land of righteousness, why did he not let the loving Spirit lead him forth unto perfection? Others had given themselves up and suffered unjustly, and triumphed gloriously—why not Raj? A sentence from the Legend of the Voice at Sinai came then with mighty healing:

"And each one in Israel heard it according to his capacity. The voice was to each one as each one had power to receive it."

And only He who spoke from Sinai can judge true judgment about capacity. Does He not measure His vessels Himself?

CHAPTER XI

"*WITHIN A WEEK*"

To understand the end of this strange story, it is needful to know that the kindness of being allowed to see the men had, unsought and unexpected, been granted again to Carunia by one high in the counsels of the Sirkar, who apparently approved of leave

having been given before. She could promise nothing; but there was always the hope that, influenced thus, they would come in. And every month of straight living strengthened that hope. It would be a miracle, of course. Everyone knew that. But when did the people of God cease to expect miracles?

So Per was again going to and fro, trying to arrange a way of meeting. But it was necessary to be very careful of such messengers, for nothing could have saved them from interminable trouble, had they been known to be carrying even innocent and permitted letters. So the letter sent had been undirected and might have been written by any mother to any sons in sore need of succour. The message that leave had been given for another meeting was to be given by word of mouth. And in settling things with Per everything had to be left open; the men would come over the mountains from their abiding-place in the west; or, if they found it better, they would come by way of the Plains. And this last time, no letter was sent, for there would be time to say all that was needful when they came. Only Carunia drew a circle on a piece of paper, and within it wrote a reference: Romans VIII. 35–39.

"Tell them the circle means the eternal love of God, and let them read the verses," she said to Per; and with that note, surely not too incriminating, in a little bag hung within his long white garment, Per, full of faith and love, departed. He looked back once as he went, "Within a week! Within a week!" and Carunia watched his tall form turn the corner down the forest path, and with a new great hope she waited through the days of that one week. Gradually, hope began to wane, there was a sense of the gathering-up of forces, the air felt electric with storm-clouds just out of sight. It may only have been the thought of that ablest of hunters on the track, with the natural fears that such a thought engendered, of panic and quick sin (the bite of the cornered rat). However it was, the time was heavy with fear, which even the remembrance of the music sounding through the valley could not lighten. Nothing indeed could lighten it but the very word of God. That word held. Music might be imagination, but when was the spoken, written word of the Lord proved an imagined thing? Over and over again through that week, Carunia found the words upon which she had been caused to hope, and listened to them and read them and reread them. Heaven and earth may pass away, but not one jot or tittle of the eternal Word.

How slowly yet how swiftly the days moved on. What could be delaying Per? But Per knew no more how to hasten than

did any other of his countrymen, always excepting the workers of iniquity who do evil with both hands earnestly. Carunia could see him, with his deliberate walk, his air of assured repose, on the Plains and on the hills. And after him, or perhaps they were ahead of him, swift runners. What if they reached Raj first?

At such times there is no end to the lovingkindness of the Lord and His comforts are infinite. Among them was always one that like the stars watched "an advantage to appear," that private star of memory, that made the brown-walled room in the Forest House like the place in the open desert where a man saw a ladder set upon the earth. It was not so much that the things seen had come to pass, though indeed that was good; it was that they had been shown at all that was so comforting. For just that brought it home to the heart that in the immaterial world which counts for so much more than the material, and yet is so bafflingly invisible, inaudible, at least to eyes and ears of sense, someone was taking note of the man, buffeted as he was by such tremendous winds. Someone was interested in him. If from the King of England a wireless message had come, "I am in charge of his affairs," with what confidence would not all who were anxious on his behalf have waited to see what was going to happen? How much surer the confidence now that from the palace of the King of kings something very much like that had come. But to what purpose had the comfort of that confidence been granted if all were to go down in defeat? *All could not go down in defeat.* There are hours when the soul rises and affirms its faith with an assurance that no force on earth can shake. Let a thousand voices quote "failures" in prayer, let facts and arguments be piled mountain high to prove that human will does often thwart the holy purposes of God, even so, though it cannot deny the awful facts, or refute the arguments, yet they melt, they pass as unsubstantial nothings before the mighty promises of God. Verily, it is a shallow experience of the ways of life and death that knows nothing of the mysteries of apparently unanswered prayer. What, a hateful voice persisted doggedly, what if Raj, fighting for his life, turned savage in the hands of his captors? But so vivid at that moment was the sense of the irresistible march of the hosts of God, that the answer flashed back as if another had answered, Even so, that would not be the end. Are the operations of our God limited by the range of our vision?

CHAPTER XIII

MARUT'S LETTER

It was the time of the year when the forest lights his candles. Scattered here and there in the midst of the dense green were brilliant yellows and reds, the flame-coloured beauty of tall treefuls of young leaves. Delicate rose pinks were there too, and old rose, and nameless tints of puce and gold. And among the rocks, by the way that Raj and Chotu might come, were great beds like snowfields of pure white scented lilies. What is it in the beauty of the world that is so tender in its friendliness? Ah, it is no mere "it." It is He, our Lord, our Beloved, who moves through the wood to us. "It is I, be not afraid." And in His woods there are many trees whose leaves are for medicine for bruises and for sores.

Down on the Plains, Marut too had a letter. "Thou must be the Lord's," wrote Raj. "I cannot often see thee to tell thee about the love of Jesus, so I write this letter. Leave thy Hindu shastras; they lead nowhere. Leave thy charms and incantations. (Marut was a student of magic.) There is only one way by which we may walk to the Land of Release. When we were little boys at school we loved each other dearly, we have been friends ever since. It was happiness to be together then, even so it will be happiness to be together in the heavenly land. This is my desire for thee, even that thou mayest know Jesus my Lord. I am wandering about on the mountains and cannot tell thee all that is in my heart to tell thee of Him. But on the Friday of next week I intend to go to my mother who is in the Grey Forest. I want thee to meet me that I may take thee to her and ask her to teach thee and lead thee to Jesus my Lord. Expect me before Friday. Farewell, my brother, whom I shall for ever love. Meet me at the appointed place."

And Marut met him. The place was a grove of nut trees, there was a spring of water there, and near the spring a cave. Sitting by that spring they talked for a while, and then going to the cave Raj took Marut's hands in his, and they had their last long talk.

Raj told Marut that the bitterness of feeling himself unjustly blamed had passed entirely from him. "I have been reading about the followers of our Lord who suffered very much more than I have suffered, and in perfect innocency; whereas I sinned and deserve to suffer. My sins are all forgiven; but is it not a great thing that to me, unworthy, this suffering has been given?

"Our Lord Jesus is mindful of all things, even of the little

sparrows ; the common birds of the wood are noticed by Him ; and He said that His Father, our heavenly God, cares for them too. He, my Father, is caring for me. I have no burdens now. They are gone, I know that my death is very near ; but I go to the Lord. When He was on earth, He healed even lepers. He has healed me of my leprosy of sin. He healed a man whose right hand was withered. This right hand of mine that sinned is now a hand that has been healed. He died for me, my punishment He bore. By the merits of His blood He has washed me. He loved me and He gave Himself for me. He loves thee and He gave Himself for *thee*, O my brother ; thou, too, hast sin that must be pardoned. Wilt thou not hasten unto Him ? *My brother, come.*"

Marut listened in silence. He had never heard Raj speak so freely before. He had never seen such urgency.

" This is Sunday, the Christians' resting day," said Raj. " Come let us pray together," and he knelt down.

" Wilt thou too kneel ? " he asked Marut.

" I will kneel," said Marut, too much impressed to refuse. On a rock above, Chotu sat watching, gun in hand. Before he knelt down, Raj had propped his gun against the wall of the cave. Even in that cave he dare not forget that someone might be following Marut ; for Marut came from a house where police were quartered, he might have been tracked. But for the moment Raj let these thoughts slip, and he poured out his heart for his friend : " Lord, my Lord Jesus, Thou seest Marut, he and I have been brothers here, O let us be brothers for ever. Let him not follow after unrighteousness, let him seek and find and follow Thee. O let him be with me in Thy country. Give him with me an inheritance there." And, too much moved to speak, Marut rose from his knees.

" I will meet thee on Thursday, and on Friday we shall go together to the Grey Forest," said Raj as they parted. Of Per he said nothing. For Per knew nothing of Marut's touch with Raj and Marut knew nothing of Per's. " Is not the air full of ears and tongues ? " one of his friends had said in explanation of these many reserves. " Raj takes care of us who love him." And because of this care many a little incident, that would have been very comforting and reassuring through those most anxious days, was wrapped up in quietness. And the men and women who prayed had to continue to learn to stay themselves, not upon the evidence of things seen or heard, but on the Lord their God.

The week passed. They did not come over the mountain.

There was no low bird-call at the window at night. Had they found that upper way watched, and were they going to try the perilous way by the Plains?

CHAPTER XIV

THE LAST BARS OF THE "PILGRIMS' CHORUS"

CARUNIA was writing to those who were pledged to pray for Raj. She had just copied his last letter, and was pausing for a moment, pondering the inextricable confusion of circumstances, wondering by what turn of events the word of peace and victory that had been given would be fulfilled, when Per came in, unannounced, by the open door.

But he sank to the ground, his shoulders heaving; and he groaned aloud.

"Have they sinned?"

The words were torn from Carunia.

"No, no, no. They died clean."

And after that nothing seemed to matter.

. . . . . .

It was Thursday—the day Raj had arranged to meet Marut and bring him up to the Grey Forest. It was the time when men are out at work and women are indoors cooking. No one had seen the armed police who had entered the Village of the Reeds by the winding lanes that lead from the road.

The three Englishwomen from the Garden House who were living there were kneeling, as their custom was, with their Indian friends, before starting for their evening's work, and—again this was their custom—they were praying for Raj and Chotu.

As they were in the act of asking that the men might be kept from sin, the sound of guns near by startled them.

They did not know, till the women who had just heard of it ran in to tell them, that Raj and Chotu were said to be in a little red-tiled house, almost the only tile-roofed house in the village, three streets distant from the field where the mission-house is built. They did not know, till all was over and a Hindu told it, that, when they rang the bell for prayer that early morning, Raj and Chotu, in the upper room of that little house, had knelt at the sound of the bell.

But now there was confusion, the sharp report of guns, shouting, and cries of women who rushed to the mission-house.

Who can describe, who cannot imagine for himself, the sudden

upflaring of primitive passion, the fierce torrent of emotion that must have raced through those men as they knew themselves betrayed, trapped, outnumbered? In the flash of a rifle decision was made; they would fight. But how they fought let their deeds tell.

They were both crack shots. The small windows of the house made good loopholes. The large loose roof-tiles could have been raised at any point, so they could have fired on their assailants in any direction. The battle, as the papers called it, lasted for about three hours; they had plenty of cartridges, they fired continually, but hit no one till—and at this point Marut and others drawn from the neighbouring villages by the sound of guns stood near and saw what happened—a policeman and a spy approached and set fire to the roof of a low verandah which ran along one side of the house. The roof was of palm leaves. It blazed up immediately and threatened the village with destruction. Then Raj fired twice to hit. Two policemen were carried off wounded. The spy who fired the leaves was the one to whom Raj had said, "And thou, brother!" the man whom he had forgiven. That was the moment of extreme peril: if the blood-lust had seized him then——?

The house filled with smoke from the verandah below. The door had been locked on the outside: their betrayers had seen to that. Somehow they broke out. All was pandemonium. Ten cottages were blazing, their palm-leaf roofs went up in flame and smoke, the women rushed in to drag their poor little properties out of the burning houses and others tore off the roofs which had not yet caught fire. Then the Englishwomen saw a policeman aim at someone. It was Raj. And immediately two men—Raj and Chotu—ran quietly down the road without haste. They were only a few yards from the gate of the mission-house where two armed men were crouching. They ran almost with unconcern, as though they scorned to show fear. Every moment the white women, who now saw them for the first time, expected to see them fall.

A stream flows between the village and the Plains. As he leaped it, Chotu slipped. The son of the spy had never forgiven Chotu for his careless, "Shall I shoot?" on the day when he and his father came upon Raj in the cave. He shot now. "Do not do himsa": it was the boy's last word as the police closed round him. The white women were beside him in a moment, and protected him from that. He raised his hands in thanks; about ten minutes afterwards he died.

Meanwhile, Raj had gone on through a wood of scattered

palms. He was shooting in the air as he went, and did not know that Chotu had fallen. But the cry reached him. "Chotu is shot."

He was near the Lake of the Reeds then, and within reach of safety. He stopped at once. For the moment there was no pursuit, and only friends stood near; among them Per, whose journey had been delayed, and who was on his way to the hills when he heard the shots and ran to be with his friend. But Raj took no notice of Per or of any other. He stood looking back to the path by which Chotu should come, shading his eyes with his hand, and his eyes were terrible. "Chotu is shot! He is dead!" came the cry through the wood, and the shouts of his pursuers came with that cry. Raj turned then, and took cover behind a low wall, and shot along the ground; one man was slightly hurt in the foot and the white women tended him.

"He could have picked them off one by one as they came up," said the first white man who examined the place. (A glance at the perfect cover of the tiled house in the village, and at the low wall by the water, made the truth plain to all who wanted to judge for themselves.) And now he was crushing down the terrific temptation to avenge Chotu's death. (He had not exhausted his ammunition—so the police evidence said. He could fight yet.) Up till that moment it had not been spiritual victory. "If Thou, Lord, be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it?"

But now Raj sprang out, drew himself up, and "looked as if he remembered something." What was it he remembered in that most solemn moment? "If only I heard that thou hadst died without a weapon in thy hand"—was it that? He sprang to a bank of red earth, stood there, swung his gun three times round his head, and flung it away. It fell on the sand near the lake.

Then Per, and all who saw him, say he looked up with a look as of one suddenly freed. It was a look they never can forget. Up and up into the sky now colouring for evening he looked steadfastly, and then across the waters to his own blue hills, so near, so far, and he raised his hands in worship. And slowly, calmly, his eyes swept the landscape again, as though in farewell. Then he wheeled round to face the men who, seeing him unarmed, had drawn up through the palms.

They were still at a little distance, but within range; there was nothing between but a ditch, some twelve feet deep, and a low hedge: Raj's figure stood out clear against the hills and the sky. He tore from his shoulders the white scarf he wore and stood

bare to the waist. "You whose duty it is to shoot, shoot here," he shouted, and pointed to his heart. They heard him and they shot. The bullets fell round him. Not one hit him. Was he invulnerable? Was it the charm?

Very slowly then, facing them all the time, Raj began to walk backwards towards a tamarind tree sixty yards to the west. Prayer had been made for him under the shadow of that tree; but of that he knew nothing. On the plain to the west lay his parents' graves. He stood on the western side of the tree, with the trunk between him and the men who were gathering up from the east, and calmly and reverently he did obeisance towards the place of the graves. Then he returned to the eastern side, and stood, with his back against the trunk, facing the baying mob now hemming him in on three sides.

The police fired. Sixteen bullet-holes were left in the bark round the place where Raj had stood; several were in a branch about fifteen feet from the ground; many bullets had struck the sand round about. Raj was not touched. He sank slowly as though to kneel down. There was an instant of dead silence. Then it was hell let loose. They were all upon him. One of them bit into his neck. ("I wanted to taste and see what the blood of such a man was like," he explained afterwards.) Raj thrust out his left arm, and the butt-end of a gun crashed down on it and broke it. There is no need to write or to think of the next few minutes. At last, still breathing, he was dragged by his silk waist-scarf tied round his feet over the rough ground near the water's edge. "Club him not. Break his right arm and his left leg," one had shouted as they dragged him towards the water, thinking perhaps, as he still lived, that he could be taken alive. But that was spared him. His warfare was accomplished. Just as he was about to die a bullet at close range was put into his head, and after that there was no more that they could do.

The crowd scattered. The men who loved him hurried home, too broken with horror to be able to pierce through the things they had seen to the fair and quiet glory beyond.

CHAPTER XV

LOOT

An hour after all was over, two Englishmen motored up, and straight to them went Marut, the herb doctor, past caring what might happen to him. He told them of the clubbing to death, of the bullet put in at the last to mislead them, of the firing of the

village without warning. He poured out of his passionate burning heart the scalding truth about the robberies, spoke words seldom spoken by brown men to white, reckless as he was at that moment. But to the Englishmen what he said was the raving of a fool. He turned from them and went, and vowed he would never again tell this thing to any white man and be doubted. He kept his vow for months. At last he came into contact with the highest white man in his world, and he watched him day by day, watched the very gestures of his soul. He was satisfied, and he told him this that had been as fire shut up in his bones. Nothing can be more difficult than to give a clear account of a great confusion; but Marut's tale exactly tallied with Per's, and no one who has questioned Per has doubted his veracity.

At first some had allowed themselves to hope that one shot had been merciful, and that Per and others who had seen the death were mistaken in thinking that Raj had died so cruelly. But the people knew better, and a disgraceful but remarkable woodcut sold rapidly. Everything had to be included, so the blazing village, the mission-house and the dead Chotu are there; but the part that holds the eye is the half-kneeling figure of Raj. A policeman strikes him from behind. In front, one makes to grip him by the throat. Another rushes upon him, the butt-end of his gun directed towards Raj. Others run up to surround him. The work is of the crudest; but every face is stark savage except one which is calm—and this is strange, for the work was not done by friends. And Raj has no look of fear; there is a kind of joy in the face. It is as though the artist were feeling after something that passed his understanding, even that look which all who saw it say Raj wore after his victory at last was won, his gun flung away, his life yielded.

For truth is unforbiddable. It slips between the bars of man's forbidding like a perfume. Trample it under ponderous feet; as well trample on a ball of quicksilver. It scatters into a myriad balls. And the balls rolled everywhere. Hindus and Christians in far scattered places kept a three days' fast, while men waited to see what would happen next, and whether this deed would be censured or applauded. The deed was applauded, and many were ashamed, though they tried to find excuse: "How should the Great, who believe only what their own say, attain to a knowledge of the truth?" was the general word as men discussed it up and down.

But what did it matter, what did anything of time matter when the fruits of eternity began to be gathered? There is no such thing as wasted pain. "By that death life came to me,"

said Marut three months afterwards. "I saw his face, I saw it as he looked up from man to God in silence; I knew what he could have done, unarmed though he was; but I saw his face." Who can explain what followed? The clinging influences of earth fell from that man then, and in that moment the amazed Hindu caught the light reflected from another Face. To friends who have come to call him back to wealth and the joys of life he has only one answer, "I have seen."

And from places in the Native State where Raj's innocence was known, messengers came asking for preachers to go and tell the story of his life and death. And men went and told, but not of him so much as of his mighty Saviour. And the Governor of the Province, touring in that State, unwittingly drew great audiences for the preachers. Perhaps, from the angels' point of view, that was why he was touring there then. But all this was only the beginning. Who can measure the effect of that last witness to the powers of the eternal? Not by the will of the flesh, nor by the power of the flesh, are such deeds done. When India, the real India, unbrutalised, sees the spiritual, she cannot resist the attraction.

Within the first few days, people from many places near by and from hundreds of miles away, came on pilgrimage to the Tree, and stood, some in anger, some in awe, under its quiet green. All his past sins were forgotten, all that was remembered was the loving heart of the man, what he had endured, his fidelity to his word, his devotion to his friends, for everyone knew what had held him, when he might have saved himself.

"Of what art thou thinking, O my brother? Of what art thou thinking?" Per who had been near him, as he stood on the bank looking across the water to the hills, had all but cried aloud that question. He knew why Raj waited there. It was not only love and longing for Chotu. Raj had said a little while before, "It would be easier for my people if I were dead." "He is thinking of that," thought Per. But soon Per, who knew every line of his dear friend's face, saw it change. Like a wave washing away all lesser things, a wave of peace swept over it. "No, he did not see men, he saw none of us. He thought of none of us. He was conscious of nothing then but God. 'Would the One who suffered for me even to the extremity of the death-penalty forsake me at the last?' he had said, and he was not forsaken."

And as Per stood by him, in his little waist-bag lay the half-sheet of note-paper with the circle drawn on it, and within it the great words whose truth no mortal man has fathomed:

"For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels

nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

But Per broke down afterwards. For a week he lay speechless, unable to touch food, seeing only the sight he had seen, held down by the grief of it, blind to the joy in it, till the overtaxed mind gave way and he was as one who feels with groping hands in the dark. And he lay so for many hours. At last over the tortured mind a memory drifted of something left undone; and so, still groping wistfully, he came to a letter that was not a letter but only a circle with the word and numbers; and his hand felt for his little waist-bag and he drew the paper out: "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? . . . We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us . . . through Him that loved us.*" Were the words bells? They rang in his mind like bells, like the clear, soft, little bells that Raj said the birds of the wood rang for him and Chotu. "*That loved us . . . that loved us.*" Per heard them ringing now. And he came back from that dim land and lived again, a man who had been comforted.

. . . . . .

The house was searched for loot; for Raj, according to the published police stories, had amassed over thirteen thousand rupees, besides untabulated properties. No loot was found, but a bag was found, and in it was the New Testament given on that night at the edge of the forest. A little blue copy of the Psalms was in it too, and a wordless book, whose pages Raj and Chotu had turned over in the dark on that night of meeting. "When it is light we shall look at the colours and remember," they had said. The colours were black, red, white, and gold.

A Hindu from a neighbouring town told Carunia about these books being found by the police. He had no knowledge of what books the men had; but, as he described them one by one, Carunia recognized them as the last she had given to Raj, and she tried to recover them. But Authority reminded her that the house had been set on fire, therefore the books must have perished; and yet the house denied it, it stood almost intact; nothing in it had perished. Still, the chief consolation remained; the knowledge that Raj had his books with him. His purpose, it afterwards transpired, had been to go to Carunia by way of the Plains, when the invitation to the feast came, and Chotu

had not been well and wanted to rest in the village, so he took it on his way. But mark the tenderness of our God. What would it have been of heart-break, to what sore misunderstanding would it have led, had the men been followed to the Forest House and trapped in the Grey Forest? Merciful, merciful is the Lord.

The books Raj had read in the jail were sent to his children. They are full of marks, pencillings and references, and on the blank page is written the English alphabet with the sounds expressed in his own vernacular alongside. Evidently Raj had determined to learn English. But it is the references, and those many little signs that tell of a very simple faith, that reinforce all that is otherwise known of the man, a man so remarkable that he had a hold on the affections of thousands who never saw him.

CHAPTER XII

VINA

But if thousands who never saw him loved him, much more did those love him who had known him well. Vina had been so hard and so wicked that no one expected much from him, but when the news of Raj's death rushed through the sub-jail in the Native State where he was still under trial, he would neither eat nor sleep, but only demanded to be taken to the water " that he might perform the death ceremonies for his father," and when this was refused he said, " Then I will die," and he turned his face to the wall. And when no one was near he moved back a little, and dashing his head against the wall tried to end his life.

When he recovered, as he did after a while, they let him have his way, and he was led to the water.

And standing there, he mourned in a loud and lamentable voice, " O Raj, my father! O Raj, my father! " and he threw a few flowers on the stream, and with a farewell to the spirit of his captain, he turned and let them lead him back to the jail.

That jail was difficult to find, for it was only a sub-jail that lay outside the knowledge of people living in the town. At last the Ford found it, and leave was given for Carunia and her friends to see Vina.

Vina had been the ruffian of the band. Was there any hope for Vina? " He had only one soft spot in the whole of him. It was his fondness for Raj. The worst of them all, what use to go? " This had been said more than once, as though the word

of the Saviour had been, "I came not to call sinners, but the righteous."

Now, there he was, standing behind his bars, his face pressed against them in his effort to look down the passage whose blank wall faced a row of cells. Out went his hands, and he gripped Carunia's as though he would pull her bodily through.

"I thought you would never come. I have importuned your God to send you. I did not know the proper way to address Him; but I cried to Him and I sighed to Him, 'Send her, Thou God of Raj, send her, I beseech Thee.' And I wrote a letter, did it not reach you?" (It had not.) "And I tried to remember the words," and he poured out, to Carunia's astonishment, almost all she had said by the Lotus Water while his frowning eyes had been staring across the plain and he had not seemed to hear.

"When I was in the district jail, I saw you one day teaching Raj; I besought to be allowed to talk with you, but it was forbidden. And now my captain is dead and my desire is hot to read the books he read." And he told of his life, that strange caged life, told how he had walked up and down the cell till he all but went mad, for he had nothing to do from dawn to dusk, and each day was like a month. But eventually he would be sent to some big jail where there would be work to do. That prospect cheered him.*

"And I did as you wished," he said; "I stuck to the truth even as Raj did; through all my trials in Court I told no lie till about six months ago. Then when no answer came to my letters I thought, 'What use to try any more? They have no hope for me.' So I had no hope for myself, save to help myself if I could by lies. And I lied vigorously. It was about that stabbing business," he explained, in a calm parenthesis, doubtless expecting his hearers to be at home in all the doings of that lurid year on the road. "I was in it—Raj was not. I did not say Raj was; but I did say I was not. I will lie no more." He listened then for a while to the word that had set Raj free.

"If thou canst bring a clean record from the jail, I will take thee at the end of thy sentence," said Carunia at last; "that is," she added, "if thou art verily in earnest to do right." Vina smiled, a non-committal smile; but surely, bad as the man had been, there was some hope for him. He was not all hard. And as he stood there, still holding her hands in his which were thrust

* For the work of Sir Andrew Cardew, former member of the Madras Government, abides. And the great District Jails of South India have a name among the people that means, "where himsa is not," as contrasted with the sub-jails and police stations of the country towns and villages.

out between the bars, it was difficult to believe that this was Vina, the terror of the roads. In the dimness of that dreary place (for it was evening) his face, so light in colour that it was hardly brown, looked even paler than it was by nature, and wavy hair, parted in the middle and hanging down on either side, lent it a mild expression.

"Yes, he is behaving properly," said Vina's guard. (Vina in an undertone about his guard had said, "He is kind; he is not cruel.") "But it is not well to wait long. There might be trouble." So lest there should be trouble, the good-byes were said, and as his friends turned at the end of the passage, they looked back, and saw that pale face in its frame of dark hair, and its eager following eyes: it was not smiling now, and the face was pressed against the bars.

CHAPTER XVII

MORE LOOT

ONE day a little brown-paper parcel was sent to the Garden House. It was a book of lyrics which had been found in one of Raj's caves. A friend, an Englishman, belonging to one of the public Services, was staying at the Garden House, and he and a party from the house set forth to see the cave where this innocent fragment of loot had been retrieved, the cave where Raj was when Kumar found him, and Raj warned Kumar away from the false glamour of their life.

It was early morning in full moonlight when the Ford turned out of the Garden House gate and found its way over impossible-looking places till it reached the road under the mountains. The moon had banished the lesser stars, but the Cross and the pursuing Scorpion held the southern sky, and Jupiter shone like a jewel. The world lay lovely in her sleep, and sinful things and sorrowful things felt a million miles away.

The moon was still shining when the car stopped under a tree, where bullock-carts were to be ready, but naturally, this being India, were a little way behind.

In moonlight nothing is uninteresting, the plain, the lane bordered with tall euphorbia whose pale pencils were spectral against the sky, the rough waste beyond, the river among his stones, the hills, all took from that light something that they cannot find in sunlight. Dawn saw small figures like white flies on the bare shoulder of a rock that pushed up black from his green dress; on the top was a huddle of boulders flung on the rock by some giant of the past. The other travellers pressed on through a small wood

surrounding the base of the rock and walked up the shoulder. "There it is!" said the guides as they reached the summit. "This is their ladder." It was a narrow chimney between two rocks; loose stones had caught in the crack and stuck there, and made a rough stair. Below, on the further side, was the cave whence the rock dropped steeply to a valley full of trees watered by a hidden stream.

The cave was small, but two or three men could crouch round the fire, and two or three could sleep stretched out under the adjoining lip. "This cave is nothing to the others over there," said the guide waving his hand towards heaven. "In the upper forest there are many, and large; this is just a little one they used when they wanted to be near the road." But, nothing though that cave might be, it commanded a great glory.

For across the wooded gully rose the mountain, colouring in sunrise. Sheer precipice for some fifteen hundred feet fell towards the wood that climbed to meet it. The Plains were blurred still and misty. In the far east a rim of little clouds, whose edges were pricked out in a thin line of fire, rose from the sea.

What a place to awaken in: lie on the smooth rock under the overhanging boulder, and the curve of the lip makes the upper side of the frame of that wide picture. You can lie and look out upon the firmament with his changing shows. You can see all colours there, watch all movements, pass in a moment from the massive strength of the mountains to the wind-blown flower of grass that grows in a crevice of your rock. It was a king's bedroom.

Only a few months before, a boy passing through the wood below had heard a man half chanting, half singing. He knew who the singer must be, for who else would sing in the wild, "Lover of souls, Lover of souls. Ah, if Thou wert not, then what should I do?" It was the song that Raj had taught the little child on his knee, and the boy had climbed up to the cave, and snatches of the song had met him as he climbed:

Lover eternal, Lover eternal,
Thou didst come patiently looking for me,
Giving Thy life Thou didst ransom my life.

Jubilant Lover, jubilant Lover,
Praise Thee I will, and for ever and ever,
Drawing my strength from Thee, leaning on Thee.

Lover of souls, Lover of souls,
Joyously shall I be with Thee for ever;
Clinging to Thee, Lord, be with Thee for ever.
Leave Thee? Oh never; no never.

This was the song. "But many things sang he," said the boy. "I cannot remember them all."

After the word of the song had been fulfilled and there was nothing more left to ask, the boy had climbed to the cave again, half wondering if anything would be found there. At first he saw nothing but the charred sticks of the last little fire, till, peering into the dark interior, he saw a small white thing, a book—it was the book of songs.

Sitting in the mouth of the cave and under the overhanging rock, Raj's friends kept quiet and listened. The cave was full of songs. But fiercer things than songs were there.

On the night when she had met the men and they had talked together, suddenly a cry such as she had never heard before had startled Carunia. It was Chotu who had lifted up his voice and wept. Then in the cloudy dark she had seen Raj bow his head, as though to let the storm sweep over him. She had held his hand and Chotu's in hers, but she could not speak, and for a little while no one had spoken. She remembered this. What pangs of human anguish those cave walls had enclosed!

But not into the darkness of the cave, but out to the clear air of the dawn, these friends of Raj looked now: that air was sweet with the first blue of the morning, a clear, innocent blue. On the other side of the mountain was the room where many a friend of his had stood looking towards this very place, longing to follow their eyes and be there with him in his need.

What had happened when they prayed in that room? Who had moved through the air, crossing the great stone mountain as though it had been a little grassy hill, crossing the wooded valley, walking the air-way above the trees down there, till they came to this cave, and then——?

What secrets the air holds! Movements stir it, voices fill it. What will it be when we see the heavenly people, are among them, share their ministries?

All through that morning Carunia had been trying to recall the Pilgrims' Chorus. It had been so knit into every thing connected with Raj that she wanted it now. But it would not come. Even when the Englishman who had lately become interested in him and to whom that music bore the same mysterious powerful word, whistled the opening bars for her, its progression of chords eluded her. And she could not understand this inability to recover what had been so constant a companion till suddenly, with a rush of joy, she recognized an inward inhibition. The travail of spirit that music had expressed and succoured could never be again. Another melody came now. The birds in the little wood were singing

it. The calm beautiful mountain played its peaceful chords. It was, "O rest in the Lord," from the "Elijah." So the children from the Garden Village, whose rice Raj had guarded long ago, precariously seated at that moment on the extreme edge of the rock, gathered closer, and sang it with the birds and the mountain. They had sung it many a time to hearten her when the evil-doer was bringing his wicked devices to pass, and when it had seemed impossible that he should not win in the end. They sang it now that he had done his worst, and failed. And while they sang a small grey squirrel raced along a wrinkle on the face of the precipice.

Then they read from the Psalm that calls our God a Stony Rock. Read even under a roof and between walls, crowded by stuffy furniture, that Psalm is glorious. Read in the open air, with clear blue overhead, and mountains for the large rooms' furnishing, it passes anything man's poor little houses hear. The thunder-storm verses crashed, the cry of fear was alive. Then came the wonder of such words as these: "He shall send down from on high to fetch me, and shall take me out of many waters. He shall deliver me from my strongest enemy, and from them which hate me; for they are too mighty for me"—And the Prayer Tree at the foot of this same mountain, and the wild scene under it, came almost visibly into view, and the long fear of "Instans Tyrannus"—"He brought me forth also into a place of liberty."

"They were often hungry," said the guide, pointing to the little fire-place with the charred sticks lying as they had left them between the three stones—there was something that caught at the heart then—"Often there was hardly anything to boil in the pot." At such times must not he who took the sinless Christ up into an exceeding high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, have approached those two men in this high place, and showed them the road, where it crossed the plain, and said many things to them that need not be written here? But these thoughts could not torture any more.

It was all over, that nightmare terror of sin could never be again. He who died for them had planned for them. He had sent from above and fetched them and brought them forth into a land of liberty.

It was time to go. The fiery cloudlets had melted in light. The sea lay like a silver ribbon. And above the air was blue, blue to the utmost depths of the heights; a morning without clouds.

PART XII

O Captain of the wars, whence won Ye so great scars?
In what fight did Ye smite, and what manner was the foe?
Was it on a day of rout they compassed Thee about,
Or gat Ye these adornings when Ye wrought their overthrow?

"Twas on a day of rout they girded Me about,
They wounded all my brow, and they smote Me through the side;
My hand held no sword when I met their armed horde,
And the conqueror fell down, and the Conquered bruised his pride."

What is this, unheard before, that the Unarmed make war,
And the Slain hath the gain, and the Victor hath the rout?
What wars, then, are these and what the enemies,
Strange Chief, with the scars of Thy conquest trenched about?

"The Prince I drave forth held the Mount of the North,
Girt with the guards of flame that roll round the pole.
I drave him with My wars from all his fortress-stars,
And the sea of death divided that My march might strike its goal.

"In the keep of Northern Guard, many a great dæmonian sword
Burns as it turns round the Mount occult, apart:
There is given him power and place still for some certain days
And his name would turn the Sun's blood back upon its heart."

What is Thy Name? Oh, show!—"My Name ye may not know;
'Tis a going forth with banners, and a baring of much swords,
But My titles that are high, are they not upon My thigh?
'King of Kings!' are the words, 'Lord of Lords!'
It is written 'King of Kings, Lord of Lords.'"

FRANCIS THOMPSON.

CHAPTER I

WILL IT BE ALLOWED OUT?

ON the night of the day Raj and Chotu were killed, three robberies were committed in their name, in villages to which the news of their death had not penetrated. And for a while the robberies went on gaily. Some were committed in the name of Raj's ghost.

"It should enlighten the official mind," wrote one, himself an official, who had watched events for some time.

"Dig up the floor of the house of the brothers," the Garden House had often said to any friendly officer who chanced to call. "Look there for at least some of your loot." And at last the leaders of one of the bands which had impersonated Raj and Chotu were arrested; that floor was dug up, and an Inquiry after the medieval fashion of the land was held in a town three miles from the house.

The Inquiry over, a man who had attended it throughout came with one of the chief men of the district to tell Raj's friends about it.

There was quietness in the room as that tale was told. And when it was finished a hush held the hearts of the listeners. They were thinking of all that lay behind the closed gates of that great year; of the human striving and human pain, and a loving keeping and pardon. At last someone spoke:

"Was it definitely asked if Raj and Chotu were in any of those robberies?"

"Definitely it was asked and definitely it was answered. They were in none of them. Their names do not appear in the lists."

"What of the other robberies?"

"It is believed that there are clues."

"What of the imitation things, clothes, guns, and so forth?"

"They have the name of the tailor who made the clothes, and the name of the man who sold the guns" (a name to be swiftly covered). "And many other matters can now be traced. For there are clues that will lead to the robbers who personated Raj and Chotu so cleverly in the Village of the Temple" (and the man named the village to which those robbers belonged). This robbery had caused grievous sorrow and suffering to innocent people, and many most thankfully heard of the clue given at last. The bazaar had talked to the same effect all along, but so far in vain. Now, surely all would come to light.

That night a message came from a Hindu who knew the core of things:

"Would it be possible to ask Authority, the highest in the district, to come out and look into the records at once?"

"It is almost certain to be impossible to ask anything of the sort. But why ask it?"

And when the reply to that question came back, it was in effect, "Smoke-screens."

A couple of days afterwards, he who had called Raj's friends to hear the account of the inquiry met two police officers; "Will it be allowed out?" he asked. "Out?" they said, understanding

him to mean out among the people, " It is out. It could not be stopped. We were thoroughly deceived." (For some, as Raj knew all along, were honest in believing him to be robbing.) But two days later another answered the same question differently. " Out ? " (He was thinking in terms of official recognition of the facts.) " *It will not get out unless we allow it out.*"

" And the interesting thing is," said high Officialdom a month or two later, " that the robberies about which we were doubtful all along are just those about which we have now got information. As for the others "—the sentence need not be concluded.

But on that first evening this was not foreseen ; the truth seemed to escape like light and all heard it at once, and there were dreams of a swift tracking down of the other gangs, of a generous public acknowledgment of injustice unwittingly done. Great and small the people were saying, each in his own fashion, " Verily there is a reward for the righteous. Doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth."

So all was pure joy then. " We knew it before," said Per in the first great throb of happiness, " but it is praise and thanksgiving that all the world may know it too."

But not all the world was to know it. Fifty-five days later the Ford, full of Garden House people chanced to be passing through the border town when they saw a group of men by the wayside among whom were two or three policemen. The Garden House had heard that some of those who had killed Raj were now sorry, feeling that they had done a cruel thing ; and with the friendliest thoughts the Ford stopped to speak with them. What if this experience might be the gate of life for those policemen ?

But these were not the men of whom that good news had been told. A police officer from a neighbouring town was holding what appeared to be a kind of Inquiry, and as he was far from repentant sorrow, the Ford was about to drive on, when he thrust the broken end of a gun into Carunia's hands, saying, " Behold the murderer's work ! This is the rifle of the murdered policeman. It was found in that man's garden," and he indicated an embarrassed creature who was vainly trying to eliminate himself. But the crowd of men who had gathered to see the stump of the gun were merciless, and the more that unfortunate man shuffled the more they opened out, so that he was exposed to view. It was Maya, whom Raj had employed as messenger.

Maya looked up. He saw Dass in the car ; with a pained gesture he averted his eyes.

Dass saw the gesture and laughed.

For both men were thinking of the same thing, even of a chance

meeting on the road four days after Raj's death, when Maya had politely accosted Dass, and asked him to give a message to his wife. "I have agreed to say everything they wish," he had said. "There is much that is required, even all that they order me to say about the robberies. No harm whatever will happen to me. Tell her not to be anxious." He was to accuse Stira, the relative of the woman who had feasted Raj; and Studi. Others also were to be implicated in Raj and Chotu's crimes. And he had told Dass that he had been handcuffed, but that he would "not be handcuffed any more. They said, 'Thou art an approver now. No harm will come to thee.'"

Dass had duly given this message to the wife. (She had previously told the white women who lived in the Village of the Reeds about her husband's being beaten to make him say what was required.) Maya had been kept under guard ever since, but here, most unfortunately, was Dass; and he would tell Carunia, indeed, evidently had told her, for she was looking at him. Oh, if only they would look the other way, then he could slip off and escape from their quizzical eyes. Once he ventured a nervous glance; his face twisted up in a sheepish grin, he covered his mouth with his hands and wriggled rapidly round another man's back, and hoped he was hidden at last. But the man moved, and again poor old Maya was left without cover.

Then the gun Raj had swung round his head and flung away was handed into the Ford, "The last of his stolen guns." Those in the Ford knew how Raj had got it. But he would have said, "Let it be," so they said nothing.

"But you have discovered the truth about many of the robberies charged to him," said one in the car, feeling that, at least, safe ground.

"Oh, a few," and the Inspector reeled off seven names. "We knew, of course, that those were not his work." Here a man standing by interpolated, "And the Village of the Temple" (the village robbed at the time Carunia had been asked to try again). The Inspector turned on the interpolator with a peremptory, "Be silent."

How hopeless it felt; what was the use of waiting? But the Inspector had not yet produced his trump-card.

"There stands the man who has confessed it all," he said, pointing to the unhappy Maya who, now that he was thus singled out, became more and more anxious to be somewhere else. "Come," and he beckoned him forward. "Come, say it. Tell of the gang of five. It was five? Say! or was it six?"

But fear had surprised that hypocrite. His heart failed him,

his tongue faltered. " I looked for a bag wherein to put my head," wrote an erring little Indian schoolboy about an interview with his master. That unfortunate man appeared to be looking for a bag. " Five, five," repeated the Inspector impatiently, with a stimulating scowl directed towards Maya. " It was *five*. Say it."

There is a rude proverb which runs, " If you lie, let your lie be well set," that is, as a well-set bone. Lie, so as to be believed. Resisting with some difficulty an unholy impulse to quote that proverb, for nothing cuts like a proverb, Carunia said to the poor Maya who, after one agonized glance at the man in the Ford, stared earnestly at his feet, " Say it, say five, say ten, say twenty." Then from every man of that mixed group of Law and Lay, save only the Inspector and the informer, burst a big laugh. It was truth neat, and Lay, at any rate, liked the taste of it. The Ford's little red flag shook with that laugh and, as it drove off, it looked back and saw the crowd still laughing, the Inspector still scowling, Maya still hunting for that bag. Poor Inspector, poor informer, it must be very unhappy to feel like that !

A little over two years later, Carunia travelling by public motor bus was listening with interest to the talk of the bus.

" Duck down thy head, brother," sang out the driver, interrupting, " and put thy bundle on the top of thy head so that it will appear as only an extra bundle. It is *his* car. Duck ! " The man ducked.

" Never heed the lesser ones, but if *his* car appears, instantly duck," continued the driver genially to the family at large. " Nay, little one, keep off for a moment," this to a youth who apparently intended to jump on the bonnet, " He might turn." But the Superintendent of Police did not turn, so the lad was soon on the mudguard, and two or three others on the step hung like bees on the edge of a swarm, and the bus staggered round the corner.

Then the men in the bus talked, and presently they got to the subject that even at that date awoke interest. " Dead is he, the lie-telling worm."

" So two informers are dead and gone to their account. That is good," remarked a quiet-looking man in the corner.

" Who is dead ? " asked Carunia, who was sitting by the driver.

" Maya, the informer, through whose word so many have been sent to jail. Aye, he was backed up by ' witnesses,' who doubts it ? It had to be, but it was Maya's lies that helped most." And they talked on. So poor old Maya gained little after all.

CHAPTER II

A CELL, AND A MAN IN EACH CORNER

WHAT the relatives of men apprehended in this way have to suffer may be left to the imagination. Immediately upon that meeting of Dass and Maya, the wife of one of the five sent a desperate message to Carunia imploring her to intercede for her husband, that he might not have himsa. The responsible official was out in camp, and after a long search was found, and he promised to write that same afternoon and forbid himsa. Carunia sent a reassuring message to the wife, "Fear not; the promise has been given." But a few days later that wife came, and with burning eyes she told what those eyes had seen, for she had followed her poor man and stood near when the himsa began. "But when the needle was thrust into his nail I fled, I could endure no more."

"It is not always so ruthless," said one who was trying to comfort Carunia, "I myself asked why it was so severe, worse indeed than has been known for several years; and I was told that there is fear that your words will one day be believed, and a searching Inquiry result in discovering the truth about the death of Raj. So it is necessary to prove that he had been robbing with a band"—in order, he meant, that it might be thoroughly apparent that Raj was vermin and had to be exterminated. The existence of his band would help towards that.

All five men who were charged with belonging to the band suffered greatly, and four of them, while going through their prolonged preliminary trial, were confined in a sub-jail near the Garden House. Books were sent to the Sub-Magistrate for them, but these were reluctantly returned by him, for he feared to give offence by allowing the men any comfort in their distress.

"But look," said a good-natured policeman to the Garden House messenger who was turning disappointed away; and the cell door was opened. In each of the four corners a man knelt with his hands raised in the Indian attitude of supplication. The messenger, much moved, raised his hands in that same gesture as the cell door closed. And that cell with the four kneeling figures became as it were a possession of the Garden House. For many months there was no way by which those men could be reached except by the way of prayer. "Bring their soul out of prison," was the constant prayer both for them and for all other known and unknown friends of Raj, and many were unknown, for at that time Pon was unknown, and of the quiet powerful work of the Book that Raj had given to him, the Garden House knew nothing.

And after a while things began to happen; three of the men were sent to one of the well-managed district jails where the improvement of the prisoners is considered, and requests for teaching are not refused. Then it was as if a wind blew and scattered them. It was difficult to find out where they were. Who was winning now?

At such a time there is immense cheer in the very simple truth that our Lord is everywhere. The men might be where there was no one to care for their souls. Even there His hand would lead them, His right hand would hold them.

Once, in Japan, the writer saw through an occasional gap in the thick undergrowth that covered a steep hill-side wonderful beds of lilies, tall, stately flame-coloured lilies. Those glimpses were most alluring. What fields of lilies God plants in the woods of the world! "As a lily among thorns," so is the blossoming of His unconquerable purpose. We see only enough to tell us how much more there is than we can see.

It was so now. Even at the time of writing hardly more than a glimpse has been given, for jails are not open gardens where every man may walk; but, though nothing more unlike lilies than men in jail could possibly be imagined, perhaps to the eyes of the angels there are flowers worth loving there.

Within a year and a half of Raj's death all four who had knelt in that dreary sub-jail had found rest for their souls in Him who calls to Himself the heavy laden. Words cannot describe the difference this made to their outlook upon life. The unbearable burden became bearable then. And two of them had chosen for their new name the name of their friend Raj, the name given in the dream that had been fulfilled. Strange that no single one of all those who had suffered for his sake blamed him for his share in that suffering. "Is he not dear to us?" is all they ever say.

But the thought of what they could not but regard as a miscarriage of justice did not become the more endurable to those who cared for the poor men, and so convinced was their Court Pleader of their innocence that he offered to meet all incidental expenses if the High Court fee could be paid for an Appeal. In that Pleader's office the sambhur's head Raj gave instead of fees is fastened on the wall and, at that time, from one of the antlers was suspended a Christmas card: "The Lord reigneth," it declared. It was good to see that word in such a place.

It was while the issue of the Appeal was still uncertain that their friend was able to see one of the four who had been sent to a distant jail. In his desperate loneliness he had said, "Surely the

darkness hath covered me." But the darkness did not hide him from his Father, and now his night shone as the day.

His first questions were about his home. Then he asked eagerly about the Appeal, but suddenly broke off, " But if it fails I can bear it," and he told of his first abandonment to grief, " night and day I wept, I could think of nothing but my old mother and my young wife and my one little child. I did not know how to live. But as I read and as I was taught of the Lord Jesus who suffered so exceedingly much more than that for love of me, I found that I could bear it. And now I have rest," he used the word which means the cooling of weariness.

And it was evidently true. Standing there in the jail office in his jail clothes he was at peace ; the face under the white jail cap had no look of discontent. There was wistfulness indeed ; when he spoke of the appeal and his poor hopes in connection with it (doomed hopes) tears started to his eyes ; but there was peace. One of the half-dozen officials who were in the room, for the time was evening and work was being put away, spoke at this point, and said, " He is a good man. We have no trouble with him," and they stood by unhindering while the prisoner and his friend knelt down and prayed to the prisoners' Saviour asking for patience to accept the disappointment if the Appeal should fail, and grace to live faithfully in the jail as one who was a citizen of another country, even a heavenly.

Then they all went out into the compound, a large well-kept place with fine old trees and borders of flowers, and a green bedding arrangement. Doubtless there were grimmer things than appeared. There was, for example, the barred inner enclosure where the men who came in with a record like Raj's were confined. (Was there one among them with a story like his ?) Looking in, as they sat in sullen rows with their food before them, she who looked would fain have been a prisoner among them if only thereby light and gladness might be brought to them.

CHAPTER III

NOT SHUT UP TO DESPAIR

" STIRA is broken," said his friends.

It was not strange that he was broken. He was the oldest man in the group arrested when Maya, the unhappy approver, had accepted his appointed rôle, and the frail elderly man had been subjected to such severe himsa that sixty-two days afterwards, when released (for he could not be proved guilty), his

body bore the marks of the blows inflicted to compel a false confession, and he could not sit up unless propped up with cushions. Driven by pity for the suffering of such men, the Garden House, through the Bishop of the Diocese, had sent careful and very reticent notes of these doings to Authority. Authority required evidence.

Naturally, the great difficulty was to get this evidence. The men concerned were by that time scattered in different jails. No man in the hands of the Law cares to speak freely, however assured that it is safe to do so. Nor will the cowed and anxious relatives speak. "The prudent shall keep silence in that time, for it is an evil time." Small blame to the poor prudent.

No woman would come forward and speak before unknown officials or indeed before men at all. One who had suffered very sorely was gently approached in the hope that she might feel she could tell at least a little of what had been done to her. But she turned a petrified face upon her friend. "Let me die first," she said, and hid her face in her hands.

So it seemed hopeless to try to do anything. But after a little while some took heart and said that if their friend were with them (but that could not be promised) they would be ready to speak. They would trust her if she assured them that the one to whom they were to open the truth would not cause them to suffer for it afterwards. Of these one, after his release, was Stira.

"I am ill, I am tired, I only ask to be left in quietness," Stira had said when Carunia put before him the impossibility of the Great doing anything to end himsa if no one would fearlessly tell of what was happening.

"Severely indeed they dealt with me," he continued, his frame stiffening at the recollection of that hour, "but I am too old and too tired for Courts and Inquiries now."

But when he understood that, by telling the truth in the open, he might be the means of bringing help to many weaker people, the valiant old man refused no longer. He was a Hindu, but surely the God of all brave men took note of it and loved him for it.

So Stira set to work with the help of his lawyer to prepare a statement, crushing back when it rose the fear of consequences to himself and to his family. And his wife, knowing nothing of his dangerous occupation, spent happy hours in concocting all manner of dishes of nourishing food. "He will soon be recovered from his sickness," she would say hopefully. "See what good soup I have made."

But one morning before dawn there was the sound of voices outside the little shut-up house where Stira lived. He was

asleep; his wife was astir, "and just about to milk the cow," as she explained afterwards, pointing to the byre. "I wanted to have his early coffee ready for him when he would wake."

"Open, open!" shouted voices that sent a pang of fear through her, and she woke the old man.

He sat up sleepily, tired still, after all he had been through, and unprepared for this.

He was dragged off. "They set thee free on the British side. We shall take thee to where they will never set thee free." It was all he knew; it was all she heard. Before the village had awakened, Stira was gone; and his wife with her head on her knees sat rocking herself to and fro, shaken with sobs.

Some hours later Stira was shown a warrant of arrest. But he could not read the words which set forth his crime. He was told then that he was to be charged with robbing with Raj in the Village of the Peacock, that village to which the winged Tiger flew after bidding good night to the ibex hunter on the high rocks of the Dæmon's Peak.

"And now he is broken," said his friends in that dreadful quietness of despair that was worse to look upon than the indignant clamours with which they had assailed the Garden House when he was first carried off. "He who befriended the poor, and did no one any harm—he is broken"; and his wife who had wept before, sat tearless.

Thereafter, for many days, it was as though every shadowy place in the Garden Village were set with bars, and a bowed old form was behind those bars; and a face, patient, dull to all gladness, hopeless in its resignation to the strange ways of fate. And the voice was the voice of a broken man. Books would have helped him, taken him into another world; but books were not allowed. A parcel of them sent to him by leave of the magistrate was not given. Again leave was obtained, and one of them, a large-print New Testament marked throughout, to lead him to words of comfort, was given; but it was snatched away and torn up before his eyes. Again books were sent, and this time they were "lost." Then a young Scotchman with a resolute will went from the Garden House, hunted through the dusty heap of débris in the Court-house, and found the "lost" parcel, and again—with permission—gave it to Stira. But no one knew whether he had been allowed to keep it. And this was in the eleventh month of his imprisonment in a cell designed for only a few days' detention. Two or three times a month he was called out, handcuffed, and led to the Court-house, where there was a preliminary hearing. He had to have his pleader

and witnesses ready, so each hearing meant expense to him, and he was being slowly drained of his little fortune. Month after month for those bookless months he sat and fed on his thoughts. Was it strange that he was a broken man ?

At last, one afternoon, in that eleventh month, the Ford stopped outside the little sub-jail on the chance of leave being given to see him, and a moment later his friends were standing outside his cell.

" Art thou in health ? " they began in the usual way, but in their astonishment stared hard at him, hardly hearing his, " To me is health," for wonder at the change in face and voice. The faded eyes were glowing, the tired voice vibrating with something quite new.

" O Stira, what has happened ? "

" This has happened " ; and Stira held up a book. " It was at last allowed to me," and pouring out words, Stira told how in reading he had forgotten his griefs. " And I found the story of One who suffered from himsa far worse than mine. And I knew that He had fellow-feeling with me in mine." (Is there any path of pain down which we shall not meet Him ? It was the suffering Saviour who met the suffering Stira.)

" And I found Him, the Lord Jesus Christ. And He is here with me," he added, and the voice that had been so hopeless rang with exultation, " He is here with me."

Print is cold, and paper is cold, and nothing that can be written in words and printed on paper can give a sense of the thrill of that moment. " He is here with me." He who was dead and is alive for evermore—He is here. Mary standing without the cave, stooping down and looking in saw two angels. No vision of angels appeared to the eyes of those who stood by that cell, their hands stretched out between its bars, clasping the hands of that old man, who as he told his lovely story had held his hands out to them. But were not the angels there, and was not the Lord of the angels there, the ever Blessed One whose hands were pierced in that himsa that was so much worse than any this His poor old man had known ? It was so, and he who does not know it has never known what life can be, what life will be when he too can say of the Lover of men, " I have found Him, He is here with me."

Among the books Stira had was a little red paper-covered life of Raj. He turned the pages and found the song Raj had sung on the evening when the traveller came upon him hungry in his cave. " My Redeemer lives, what lack I ? Answer me, O my soul," and he began to croon it over in his tired tuneless voice.

And now, of all the many words of consolation in the book that he passed through the bars, which should be read to him? The last sent to Raj seemed written for Stira: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" As those words, so wonderful anywhere, but so vivid, vital, glorious under such circumstances, rang like a song of triumph through that cell, Stira drew himself up, and lifted up his head.

Some weeks later a number of his Hindu relatives came to consult him about the conduct of his case. And Stira attempted to sing to them. "It was the song Raj taught to the little one that night when he came down, 'Lover of souls, Lover of souls, What should I do without Thee?'" they said when they told of it. For that tale of Raj's teaching the child had travelled far.

"And he said, 'Hearken all of you,' and he reminded us of the stone burden-bearers set on the roadside on which the weary may lay their burdens, and he said, 'Jesus is my burden-bearer.'"

Still later, a friend saw him after one of those most weary hearings in Court had ended, as all previous hearings had ended, in the laconic order, "Case postponed," and listened as he spoke of the peace that in very truth passes the understanding of man.

"And if in the end they condemn me, and chain me, I shall not be shut up to despair. Will not my chains be as golden garlands to me?"

It was the word Studi had used when he refused to buy deliverance from shame; but Stira had not heard it. Still less had he read of Du Bray, loaded with fetters, thrown into a filthy dungeon there to await his death, answering the Countess who wondered how he could sleep, eat or drink while covered with such heavy fetters?

"The cause and my good conscience make me sleep and drink better than those who are doing me wrong. These shackles are more honourable to me than golden rings and chains. They are more useful to me, and as I hear their clank, methinks I hear the music of sweet voices and the tinkling of bells." Thus grow in all climes through all ages the gallant flowers of God.

CHAPTER IV

MY LORD SHONE UPON ME

But Stira's story leads on into every kind of gladness. In the thirteenth month of his imprisonment his case was moved to a higher Court, and his friends rallied round him, and money flowed like water, and there the false witnesses broke down one

after the other, and became hopelessly mixed. The case was shown to be what it was. It was dismissed. He had suffered imprisonment of a most painful kind for one year and sixty-two days.

The magistrate called the police officer who had brought him the case.

"Answer me," he said, "how dare you bring such a palpable concoction to me?"

The police officer did not answer.

"How dare you," demanded the incensed magistrate with refreshing vigour, "how dare you stand there silent? You, a seventy-five rupee man, how dare you refuse to answer me, a seven hundred and fifty rupee man? Tell me that."

This was a view of matters which appealed to the crowded Court. There was a burst of uproarious laughter.

When the tired Stira was at last set free, he was perhaps too dazed to realize his relief; he turned a patient face on the congratulating crowd, and stood quietly waiting while the necessary formalities were being concluded. The officer who had torn up his marked New Testament stood near by.

"So you think that your God has done this," he mocked. The old man inclined his head, he had no words just then. A little later he described what had happened: "First my Lord shone upon me and then He unfastened my fetters."

As soon as might be, his friends went to Stira's village. After a small packed gathering in the courtyard of the house, and a quaint meal in a close little room whose small windows were filled with carved wood as if to discourage the light from looking in (how Stira must have loathed the publicities of jail meals), in the late evening the people gathered for a meeting in the street.

Women came; they stood in clusters in the corners, among them was the widow of the feast and the jewels. Behind her, too, lay himsa and prison. In her arms was the grandchild to whom Raj had taught his song. ("Say it, little one, say it," she had said, as the shy thing buried its shy face in her neck.) Men came; a hundred or more sat in rows against the walls of the houses, and boys of all ages filled up the middle space. Stira faced them valiantly; his spirit was eager to speak, but his mortal frame shook. He coughed, he faltered, he all but gave up; but his spirit conquered and he spoke.

He told them of a time when his tears were his food and his drink; of a desolation for which he had no words, for words could not show it; of the barren weeks; of the thoughts that

gnawed like little live things with teeth ; of the sense of abandonment by God and man, as he lay month after month in that cell.

Then he told them of the coming of his comfort. It came through the story of the raising of a dead man " dead for four days." He, Stira, was as a dead man out of mind ; he, Stira, was in a cell like a grave.

Up to this point Stira's voice had been weak, an almost uncontrollable nervousness had clutched at his throat ; but now he forgot himself, forgot everything in the wonder and the joy.

" That night," he said, after telling of the Lord's command to the dead Lazarus, " the night when I read of this, He Himself, that same Jesus, came to my cell ; yes, it was He and no other. He stretched out His right hand to me, and He said to me, ' Fear not, fear not, for thou shalt be delivered.' And I looked, and it was light."

A lantern swung from the tree under which Stira stood ; the faces of the men sitting on the ground as they looked up at him could be seen, intent, awed. His English friends to whom this was new, listened also, intent and awed. How fresh, how varied are the ways of the Lord with souls. Who would have thought of His reaching a captive in his cell with this tale of a man who came forth from a grave ? Stira did not explain what he had understood by the words he had heard, he could hardly have taken them to mean that he would be set free in the body, for he had prepared himself to suffer years of unjust imprisonment. He must have understood the words of power in their most powerful sense. " Bring their souls out of prison that they may give thanks unto Thy name." That was the prayer prayed for Stira and for all that group of prisoners. For months, as we have told, there was no way by which those men could be reached but by the way of prayer. " O deliver them for they are helpless and poor, and their hearts are wounded within them." Was it strange that the Lord went to the prison-house ? Would it not rather have been strange if He had not gone ? He is still in His world. And still He shines upon us and then He unfastens our fetters.

CHAPTER V

PON

" Tell others, tell others," was the word that had gripped Pon. He lived in the jail, a man set free in spirit, and he told others. Then, his sentence completed, he arrived unannounced at the Garden House.

" It has come to me with a great pleasure," he said, after he had introduced himself as Raj's cousin and told of the miracle that had drawn him, a magician and temple musician, to follow the Crucified. " It has come to me that I may be Raj's Instead " (there is such a noun in his language, it is used of one sent instead of another), " for if Raj had been set free to walk about this earth, he would have gone everywhere and told people about our adorable Jesus." It was good to hear him, good to look upon him, in his fresh vigour and pure untarnished joy. And his ways were curiously familiar ; he had his cousin's frank face and candid speech, and the same quick fling back of the shoulders. " I shall go home, work hard and pay off the great debt I incurred in trying to clear my good name from those false charges. While I am doing this, I can be telling all my relatives, and teaching my wife ; then when I am free from my debt I shall go further afield."

Someone hearing of this proposed to pay Pon's debt and set him free to go preaching at once. But Pon refused. He wanted to pay it off himself and teach his people while he worked among them.

For that which defies imitation, that rare and wonderful flame of the true evangelist, was there, " We cannot but speak "—it was that indeed. And yet, even at that moment there were troubles threatening, for, if possible, he was to be entangled in another false case, unless he would pay to escape from it. A man just out of jail is always open to such distress and, because of the change in him, Pon was the more likely to be embroiled. But his bright face had no fear in it. " My Lord has kept me for two years and five months," he said, ticking off the months after his conversion. " For seven months I read and meditated. For two years and five months I have been safe in His hand. Will the One who has kept me for two years and five months let me go now ? " It was like that word Raj had spoken by the stream where the birds rang their little bells, " Would the One who suffered for me even to the extremity of the death-penalty forsake me at the end ? " And Pon told of how his open witness in the jail had led to trouble. " But I have come to see that whatever happens is for good," he said cheerfully, and told how he had lost eleven of the forty days remitted from his sentence for good conduct, but " in those eleven days three more men believed, so what did it matter ? " The man was a flame.

Then he spoke of his book. " I loved it first for the sake of Raj, but soon I came to love it for its own sake. Oh, what a book it is. It is like no other book, and all that Raj told me I found in it, and much more than he had time to tell me."

"Where is the book?" said the joyful listener, who had given that New Testament to Raj, and wanted to see it again.

"By reading it twenty-seven men have found Raj's Lord," was Pon's answer, and something in the turn of the head and direct way of speaking suggested Raj again. "It was too precious to take from them. All the twenty-seven have been baptized and have books of their own, but I could not take that book from them. It was too precious."

"Who are the twenty-seven?"

Pon began to name them. One of them was a red-cap man. That meant that he was in for manslaughter. When, a year later, Carunia met Red-cap, his face lit up at the memory of Pon. And among them were two friends of Kumar's, the boy of tiger stories. They were both devotees and owned a shrine and were famous in their way.

"And daring," said Kumar, when he heard of it. "They feared no wild beasts, they feared nothing, neither man nor devil, and they cared not one whit for anything I could say to them." Then, as Pon told over the names, another was welcomed. It was the name of one of the four who had knelt in the sub-jail. He had been in a jail where no one outside seemed to care about the prisoners and nothing vital was going on. After a few months, the order came for his removal to the jail where Pon, all alight with his new joy, was telling every burdened heart of the rest that is offered. That poor man had six little children at home, and he could not rise above the thought of his wife, and the six helpless things left without him for many years. And he was bitterly disappointed. Had he not lifted up his hands to the white people's God when he knelt in the corner of the little sub-jail? Had their God heard his cry?

But now, with this happy Pon at hand to reassure him, he took heart to hope and he found, as everyone finds who gives the Saviour of the world a chance, that His comforts are no dreams.

But he had hardly been comforted when he was removed to the sub-jail of a town in the adjoining Native State, charged with dacoiting with Raj and Chotu in the Village of the Peacock. He found that a fellow-prisoner was there and had been there for months. He was one of the twenty-seven. He had boldly confessed his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and had been baptized, but had been taught little, because, before there was time to help him, he too had been carried off to face another trial in the same Native State.

For Maya, in the evidence which purchased, as he told Dass, his immunity from himsa, had, "let in light" (deceptive phrase)

on the dacoity in the Village of the Peacock. And so Pon's friend was lying month after month, even as Stira had lain, waiting for his trial. He was in his eighteenth month when the Garden House friends met him on the verandah of the Court-house, hoping to be able to strengthen his heart by just being there for a little. The two men, almost unrecognisably changed after their months of inaction and suspense, stood patiently waiting till their names should be called. There was time for a few words. Said one of the two, "Long ago I bore false witness against Raj in the matter of that first false case, when he was accused of robbery in the Village of the Pool. It is true that I was forced, but I did it. This has come upon me because of that." And then he added, "I took his name when I was baptized." It sounded as if he meant, in his simplicity, that he took it in apology to the memory of Raj.

And the other, he who in open Court had told why he had fallen foul of those whom it is dangerous to offend, raised his hands in the gesture which, if it means anything, means so much, even a confidence that cannot be shaken. "Not if they jail me for all my life will I forsake Him," he said as his name was called and he went in, and there in the raised dock behind the spike-topped bars the two poor fellows stood with their hands pressed together in that appeal that never looks so hopeless as in such a place.

So some at least of Pon's twenty-seven have stood the acid test of life. "The strong, the easy and the glad" may be able to do without the Lord of Love for a while, the matchless charm and the power of the Book of the Ages may be powerless to attract. But let them fall among thieves, and be stripped and wounded and left on the road half-dead, and let One come who can bind up their wounds, pouring in oil and wine, then somehow things change, "For I am sick and I am sad, and I need Thee, O Lord."

CHAPTER VI

BY THE LAKE OF THE REEDS

The lake by which Raj had stood when he said farewell to earthly things is set in unforgettable beauty. Mountains lie behind it at some little distance, and partly surround it; there are trees and palms. One tree, green all the year round, draws the eye and holds it. It is the Prayer Tree near the water.

On the bank of the Lake of the Reeds, on a quiet evening a year after the death of Raj, a number of people gathered to see

the baptism of some men and women. Every man and woman in that group had a story that reached back to Raj and his witness to the keeping power of his God. Among them was Studi, who, after months that were like fretting files, had lost in two Courts but won in the highest to which he appealed. And with joy he and the others made free with a great freedom, watched the new believers as they walked one by one down the bank and went into the water. Among them was a strangely impressive man who came forward last of all. A Hindu stood near him, vexedly frowning at him, and plucking at his scarf in a restless impotent way, as if, even at this last moment, he would fain pluck that man from this act of baptism.

But the man hardly saw him, did not heed him, his curious thoughtful face was rapt, absorbed. He walked into the water, and bending low was covered by it. For as long as a man may remain under water, he remained there, till the ripple his quiet movement had caused, ceased, and the water above him was still. Then he rose slowly to receive his new name, part of Raj's, "for by his death life came to me," he says. He was Marut, the herb doctor.

He told afterwards of that solemn moment when he realized that he was standing where he had stood on that day of the death. He told how the scene had flashed across his eyes as if it were happening over again, and he hardly knew how to endure. Till suddenly he saw the things not seen:

> I see them walking in an air of glory
> Whose light doth trample on my days.

It was that, something of that; and not for him only but for those who stood by him in the golden evening by the golden water. But to tell such a tale is hardly more than to snatch a careless handful of those bright flowers of the field, and in this field "every little daisy is a meadow"; and the song of the field is like the song of the cave where no loot was, but the innocent loot of a singing book: "Rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him. Fret not thyself because of him who bringeth wicked devices to pass." Who is offended and I burn not? cries the heart. But to burn is not to fret. Wicked devices are brought to pass, but the word has gone forth and who shall stay it? The meek-spirited shall inherit the earth, and shall be refreshed in the multitude of peace.

CHAPTER VII

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THOSE WHO BEAR THE MARK

BUT what of the wicked devices? The purpose of this book is not to emphasize such deeds, but to show forth the working of Love triumphant. And yet is it not time that such devices were stopped? We have kept within the margin of the facts. Reticence marks these pages. We "skirt the abyss."

"The Fellowship of those who bear the Mark of Pain. Who are the members of this Fellowship? Those who have learnt by experience what physical pain and bodily anguish mean, belong together all the world over; they are united by a secret bond. One and all they know the horrors of suffering to which man can be exposed, and one and all they know the longing to be free from pain. He who has been delivered from pain must not think he is now free again, and at liberty to take life up just as it was before, entirely forgetful of the past. He is now 'a man whose eyes are open' with regard to pain and anguish, and he must help to overcome those two enemies (so far as human power can control them) and to bring to others the deliverance which he has himself enjoyed."

These words, from *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest*, about the debt that every man and woman who has known relief from the tyranny of disease owes to the unrelieved, are what I would write with regard to this matter of himsa in all its varied degrees and phases. "By means of himsa men are daily caused to perjure themselves in the Courts," said one recently, "for who can stand against it?" Who indeed? Hear the deliberate judgment of the doctor in the African forest: "Pain is a more terrible lord of mankind than even Death himself." Innocent or guilty, a man usually succumbs to this terrible lord of mankind. During the course of this story there was one in a neighbouring district who (it was said) held out for a fortnight. His distress was the talk of the town, though, of course, nothing could be proved. He was found at last hanging from a branch in the police-station compound. He happened to belong to a brave caste and his castefolk gave trouble. A strong show of force, however, ended this, and there was an Inquiry.

"But," said the officer in charge of the affair in speaking of that Inquiry, "it was impossible to prove that the injuries on the body had been made by himsa." So the man's end was left in doubt. Had he been tortured to death and then hung up by

his cloth to the tree to make it appear suicide? Or had he committed suicide in order to avoid more torture? Or had he never been tortured at all? No one was surprised that nothing could be proved.

It is possible to do himsa without producing signs of injuries on the body. There are haunting allusions in the common speech of the people that have not sprung ready made from the dust. Nowhere in this book is it implied that the worse things happen every day, everywhere. Should they happen anywhere, ever? But the man who sets himself to track an age-old wrong to its lair will not walk on primrose paths; he will walk barefoot on flints and stinging thorns. Thirteen hundred miles from the corner of India to which our tale belongs, a young police officer came to his chief with the truth about these matters. "It will be hell, but I'll stand by you," said that officer who was high in his profession and keen to combat evil. The lad could not face it. He went home and shot himself.

The Fellowship of those who bear the Mark of Pain: I would, if I may, call others to this Fellowship. There are some who have suffered from man's hardness to his fellow-man. And all their fresh springs have become congealed. The tenderness is there but no one knows it, for who can see through ice? So they pass for cold-hearted, and yet it is only because they are afraid to let themselves care again. At any cost I would call them back to care. I would ask them to let the warm airs of pity stir within them, and melt that painful frost, that they, who indeed do bear the Mark though they have tried to forget it, may be numbered among the comforters who surely, like the peacemakers, are called the children of God.

And there are others, I call them too. They know nothing of the terror by night, for it has never dared to approach them. They cannot ever imagine themselves tempted to be afraid. Their lines have been cast in very sheltered places. But is not that in itself a reason why they should minister to the unsheltered? God forbid that any of us should hide behind our shelters, and preach patience to the men and women out in the bitter storm.

And I would include in the fellowhip (but already they are of it) all, whether or not they have passed through such experience, who see without seeing, feel without feeling. To such, to know of human pain is the thrust of a knife in their flesh. The soul in them flinches with the soul of the tormented. They, too, bear the secret Mark. They, too, belong together all the world over. No colour-line divides them. Distance does not exist for them. They are One Company.

There is a work for them to do. If with renewed earnestness they make mercy and kindness most beautiful in the eyes of their children, and cruelty a thing abhorred, they will give to the lands where himsa rules to-day men and women to whom the very thought of the oppression of the weak by the strong is so hateful that they will not quail, as that poor lad quailed, when the things that they have seen and the cries that they have heard are as fire shut up in their bones, and the word of the Mighty within them is, "Open thy mouth for the dumb."

Something has been accomplished; we write with hope, not with despondency. Police officers have worked to good purpose already. There are certain forms of himsa which have been banished from the police stations of India. Surely, then, there is hope that this wretched thing in all its forms, blackmail included, will soon be effectively dealt with, this cancer of the country wholly eradicated. It could be done. May the blessing of God, the All Merciful, be upon every man, be he Hindu, Moslem or Christian, who will help to heal this covered sore of the land.

CHAPTER VIII

IT IS THE SPIRITUAL THAT IS STRONG

Among the trees of the forest on the mountains of South India is a tree of fountains. Stand under it on a sunny day, and you may chance to see from every bough high up in the air scores of delicate jets of water playing with extraordinary vigour and beauty. Flying in and out of these there are often many cicadas, and where the light catches the spray the air is filled with hints of rainbows. On the ground, for some six or eight feet, the fallen leaves are moist and glistening, and on this softly coloured carpet are set, in curled vases of brown and red and orange, little brimming baths for the goblins of the woods.

It is like something you expect to see in a child's wonder book, not in an ordinary, everyday forest, rooted in solid earth, but here it is; and the people call the tree the Ever-fresh because of the wonder of its green, unaffected by lavish giving. Near by, somewhere, though often out of sight in the deep ravine, there is sure to be water.

One day a man came to the Garden House. "It is a novel that brought me," he said by way of explanation for his visit. "It is in its third edition. It shows that a change passed over the character of its hero, a brigand captain. I heard that by coming here

I could learn what changed him. For it is said that he is no other than Raj of whom all men know, shown by another name."

The speaker was not young, but he had thought it worth while to travel eight hundred miles to find the answer to his question.

"Either he was a devil incarnate—but how could such an one die such a death?—or he was a *Mahatma*—and what is the miracle which accounts for that? I heard of him in my city" (the capital of a Native State,) and the student, who had journeyed far to hear the truth about Raj, told of his own life of attempt, achievement, failure. "And I looked at some who walk in your way, but I saw little or nothing for which I could not account. Then I heard of this strange thing, a man innocent (so at least many said) bearing up against the worst reputation. I thought of him in the forest, like a rishi, but no rishi; did ever rishi suffer from a great blame as this man did? And I felt, here at last is something for which I cannot account.

"Now I have heard more fully. But still I find no answer. Books? Others have books and such result does not follow the reading of them. Friends who watched over him? But others have friends, and yet they yield. So it appears to me that there must be a secret in this."

He pondered over the revelation of that secret for some days, then for a long half-hour knelt in silence, broken only by one short word: "O Thou who didst give Thy life to destroy death, resolve my doubts, puzzle me not."

It was often so during the year that succeeded Raj and Chotu's death. It was as if unconquerable love were saying again, Thou shalt see what I will do. Each time the story was told the disappointment in it hurt like a new wound, for—till the last hour—Raj had failed of the highest; no trumpets would ever sound for him here; he was not even cleared in the eyes of the Law; and yet the love that cannot be baffled or defeated did not spurn him, but took him as he was, and used him to stir many a man to search for the Water that can sustain with perpetual refreshings the secret roots of life.

And that search continues. The first chivalrous word that was spoken of Raj after his death was spoken, it is good to recall, by an Indian police officer. "I always liked that dacoit," he said, as he looked at the battered body on the ground after Raj had been dragged to the Village of the Reeds, where the white women had guarded Chotu from harm, "I always liked that dacoit; he never offended a woman." This, for it spread far, drew some. Others had read of him or had met him in the forest. The last to come, he comes as this book goes to press, is a lad by whom hardly

a sin is untasted. Reckless and wayward, he went off to the forest to find Raj and gaze on one who could dare such great iniquities. But to his astonishment the Brigand Chief whom he had admired for his valour in wickedness—for the boy had believed all the tales that he had heard—drew him aside to a quiet place by a stream and, sitting down on a rock, pulled a book out of a skin bag in his knapsack, the very knapsack the boy had looked upon with awe, as full of tools of violence and maybe golden loot. "Listen, little brother, I have something to say to thee," began Raj, and first he read from his book. But the boy's ears were closed to that reading, only he remembers that when Raj had finished he looked at him earnestly and said, "Little brother, take heed to this. Thou wilt soon hear that I am dead, but I shall not be dead, I shall be alive. For the Man whom I trust says so, and He never breaks His word."

That talk was more than two years old, but as he quoted Raj the boy straightened his shoulders and flung back his head with a gesture that was all Raj, and he told how he had tried to forget (for his caste would outcaste him if he had dealings with Christians), but he could not forget. "The words clawed me," he said. And so at last he had come to hear more, "for Raj spoke not as one who surmises but as one who is sure." And so, unvanquished, the love of God prevails.

Blessed, ever blessed be triumphant Love. The forces of evil are immense; the awful powers of the material pile up about us like the piled rocks of the mountains. And yet at long last the Spiritual must conquer. It is the Spiritual that is strong.

CHAPTER IX

REJOICE NOT AGAINST ME, O MINE ENEMY

But what a fight it was, that fight with powers demoniacal, for the soul of a brigand chief. Such prayer is far removed from ease. It knows nothing of clean and quiet going and there is no discharge from that war. But prayer is not a lonely fight, it is a fellowship; for of the things that we have written this is the sum: "Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." "There is a path that no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen: the lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it"; but he who follows it comes to a garden and to One who waits for him there. Often when all that

had been hoped for appeared to have gone down in a welter of distress, and the spirit worn with vigil was dull and listless and tempted to give ear to the lying voice that said, Why should we wait on our God any longer ? or at least to postpone prayer till the flame had kindled again, then, through the power of the eternal Spirit, who takes the things of Christ and shows them to mortal men, there was shown a Figure kneeling alone in a garden. It was not difficult, then, to go and kneel beside Him there, and pray for Raj again. And the depression was known for what it was—the movement of satanic power that was seeking a way to close round the soul and get between the one who prayed and a loving, listening God, even the God who calleth the things which are not, as though they were. With that creeping, dark, satanic power our wrestling always is, never with an unwilling God. For God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. It is wronging His love to pray as though that were not true.

In brief, live through such an experience, and you come to this : It does not matter how many questions fill the deep places of prayer ; we shall know the answers to-morrow. To-day it is enough that we may prove our God by the humble, the far-reaching energies of prayer.

The world is tired of sham, of pious words that cover a heart cold about the grief of others. Read the best of modern poetry and fiction, and there you have it set forth in plain language, " Give us reality." Sinning, falling even where he most meant to stand, Raj was real man ; and he found Christ the Saviour of men enough for the tremendous circumstances of that year on the mountains and the Plains.

So the story has another word ringing out through it, and people all over the world have taken heart to hope for the baffled and the overcome. And they turn on the adversary with a new courage and say, " Rejoice not against him, O mine enemy : when he falls, he shall arise : when he sits in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto him." And they know that indeed and verily our Father devises means whereby His banished may return to Him, and that which He has promised He will certainly perform.

. . . . . .

The room where we write looks upon the mountains where Raj and Chotu wandered, and directly opposite is the only valley where they never stayed. It is the Valley of the Grey Forest where the house is to which Raj never asked to be allowed to go till the time came when leave was given, and he set forth to meet his death.

The valley is backed by a wooded mountain. From the forest some four thousand feet up a crag emerges whose summit is made of huge rocks tilted one on top of the other, and so contrived as to form a cave whence a view of the valley and the plain is outspread. No safer fastness could have been designed for Raj, and it would have been easy to have dropped through the forest and got supplies from the house below, which, as he must have known, was always stocked with food. The valley was searched several times, for it was believed that he was in one of its caves, very possibly in that particular cave high up in the crag that overhung the forest. And glancing up at it from the Forest House no one could wonder that this idea took root in the hunters' minds. But on the day that Pon came to the Garden House the crag for the first time moved into the story, and now appears part of it. For on that morning one of those illuminating things that so often happen out of doors occurred just after sunrise. It had been a dull dawn, till suddenly a shaft of light struck through the vapours that muffled the east, and pricked out the crag that before had been indistinguishable from the colourless mass of the forest behind, or if seen at all was a mere knot on the shoulder that shut in the valley.

And the forest awoke, green as young rice, under grey clouds, and lay back on the mountain side and showed the space between. Not of me is that crag, said the forest. And the mountain in front drew off a little, and a narrow belt of violet stretched out between it and the crag, and told of a sundering ravine. Not of me is that crag, said the mountain. So the crag stood alone.

But as the light travelled slowly across the wide valley the sense of the aloof, the alone, the individual, passed in a feeling of the beauty, the union of the whole. There was no blur now, no hint of the indefinite, but neither was there any sense of isolation. Light and shadow working together, unified all, interpreted all. It was as though the roots of those miles of mountains were discovered, and found to be just one; every pebble on every little shelf on the cliffs, set in his place, or ever the world was.

There were times in this story when the whole appeared a blur. Then, again, nothing appeared to be related to anything, each separate phrase of the movement seemed to move alone, each fragment of the picture stood alone, and the part that touched Raj stood terrifically alone. Was it caprice that had thrown the elements of the scene into that particular shape? Was there no ordering hand anywhere, no interrelation, no harmony, no hope?

I had fainted unless I had believed to see. Whatever the

story be, whether it be our own or that of another, if we wait there will be vision. We shall see a light travel over the chaos of life, composing, unifying, as it moves over mountains, forests and valleys, and illumines the ravines. To live through Raj's story was to see that illumination, to sing a new song, and to find a new peace.

But the tale has not been fully told. There are things black as a raven's wing, clear as sunlight upon water, that, if only they might be written, would reinforce the book. But they cannot be written without risk of hurt to the living men and women who cross its pages. And sometimes this has appeared to be a loss, for we seem to be showing the mere edges of His ways. "There is in God—some say—a deep but dazzling darkness." Let the spirit catch ever so faintly and afar, be it but the echo of the thunder of His power, and all that can be spoken of that majesty is only how little a whisper. It is as though a darkness were shown, but not a dazzling darkness.

And yet surely something has been shown of the operations of His hands. Pondering the outgoings of this tale, we feel, we know, that time is not, we are even now in eternity. And we know that nothing in the play of circumstance is capricious, for the Lord our God is Love; nor is there any isolation for any human soul, for we are all our brothers' keepers. And we learn, as one learns an old song set to new music, that all things work together for good, not for unkindness; and harmony, not discord, must be the end of all things; for the thoughts that our Father thinks towards us are thoughts of peace and not of evil to give us an expected end.

Many and mighty are the voices of this book. The last shall be the voice that speaks deepest to the awakened soul of man:

> Wilt Thou forgive that sin which I have won
> Others to sin and made my sins their door?

There is pardon even for that. Donne found pardon and his piercing question dropped like a spent arrow at his feet. Raj found pardon—"Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity?" (The little worn Bible that he read in the jail opens at this word underlined in blue). "He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities and will cast our sins into the depths of the sea"—"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

"He who brought light out of darkness, not out of lesser light," wrote John Donne, "He can bring thy summer out of winter

though thou hast no spring. Though in ways of fortune, of understanding, of conscience, thou hast been benighted till now, withered and frozen, clouded and eclipsed, damped and benumbed, smothered and stupefied till now; now God comes to thee, not as the dawning of the day, not as the bud of the spring, but as the sun at noon to illustrate all shadows, as the sheaves in harvest to fill all penuries."

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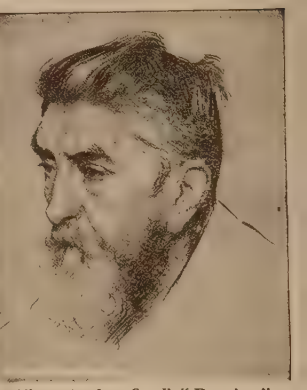

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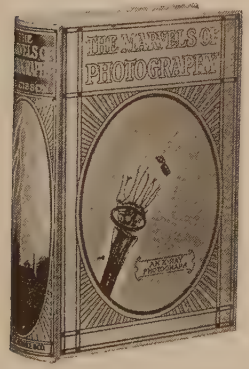

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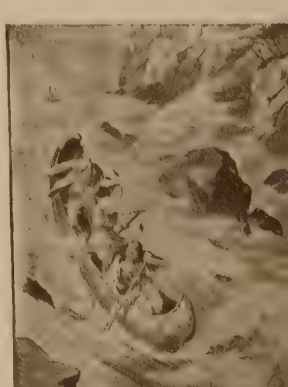

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